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MR GLADSTONE

A STUDY

"Changes which are sudden and precipitate—changes accompanied with a light and contemptuous repudiation of the former self—changes which are systematically timed and tuned to the interest of personal advancement—changes which are hooded, slurred over, or denied,—for these changes, and such as these, I have not one word to say; and if they can be justly charged upon me, I can no longer desire that any portion, however small, of the concerns or interests of my countrymen should be lodged in my hands."—Mr GLADSTONE'S 'Chapter of Autobiography' (1868), p. 13.

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MR GLADSTONE

A STUDY

BY

LOUIS J. JENNINGS, M.P.

AUTHOR OF

'REPUBLICAN GOVERNMENT IN THE UNITED STATES,'
'THE CROKER MEMOIRS,' ETC.

THIRD THOUSAND

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WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
EDINBURGH AND LONDON
MDCCCLXXXVII

1887

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PREFACE TO THE THIRD THOUSAND.

THIS book has not met with the approval of Radical critics, as I feared beforehand would be the case. But the one thing worthy of notice is, that not a single fact cited in the work has been shaken, not a single statement disproved. I have nothing to retract. Every effort has been made by Mr Gladstone's apologists and friends to explain away the evidence of his life and actions; but out of his own mouth, and by his own works, has he been judged, and it is not my fault if the judgment has gone heavily against him.

There has naturally been some controversy over the question whether Mr Gladstone did

or did not write the articles in the 'Quarterly Review' which are attributed to him in these pages. There is, in reality, no question or doubt about the matter; it is absolutely certain. Mr Gladstone was asked by some kind friend whether he wrote the articles, and his reply, as published in the newspapers, was as follows:—

"I know little of Mr Jennings, and have no intention of spending time, now very fully occupied, in searching through his pages. When his accusations reach me in some brief and definite form I will attend to them, should they seem to require it."

In my chapter on "Characteristics" there is nothing more racy of the man. He knows little of Mr Jennings; *ergo*, he cannot say whether he wrote his own articles or not. The accusations must reach him in a brief and definite form; then he will attend to them, *if*—for here there comes in another saving clause—he thinks it necessary. Collectors of Gladstoniana must be careful not to overlook this gem.

The authorship of the articles could not be

denied, but it might be evaded in some left-handed manner. One of Mr Gladstone's friends, the editor of the 'Spectator,' undertook to try what could be done in this direction, under circumstances which are explained in the following letter:—

To the Editor of the 'Spectator.'

"Sir,—With the greater part of your review of my book, I have no reason to quarrel. The weakness of your case sufficiently attests the strength of mine. The facts that I have brought forward are much too strong to be shaken by sophistry or equivocation, and although you attempt to wrest those facts from their plain and clear interpretation, every unprejudiced mind will perceive that you have failed. I had not, indeed, fully realised the overwhelming nature of the evidence I have produced until I read your article.

"There is one point on which, in the interests of truth and justice, and as a matter of permanent public interest, I desire to offer a remark. You say that it is 'extremely improper' for me to attribute the now famous 'Quarterly Review' articles to Mr Gladstone. Are you, then, ignorant of the fact that most of these articles have been attributed to him by many who stood, as it were, behind the scenes,—by contemporary writers, by Sir George Cornewall Lewis, and by Greville, among others? Have you not read, in the third part of Greville's 'Diary' (vol. ii. p. 190), the following entry, dated April 29th, 1858?—

'Gladstone will probably be no party to any arrangement, and he has recently evinced his extreme antipathy to Palmerston by a bitter, though able, review in the 'Quarterly' on France and the late Ministry, in which he attacks Palmerston with extraordinary asperity.' Are you also ignorant of the fact that Mr Gladstone himself supplied the clue to the date of his contributions to the 'Quarterly,' by republishing one of the series in his 'Gleanings of Past Years'? He merely took care to select the only article of the set in which his hatred of Radicalism, and his attachment to Tory principles, were not avowed.

"But you are well informed on the subject. Your review is the product of many consultations and inquiries, and of three weeks' anxious reflection. You dare not deny that Mr Gladstone was the author of the 'Quarterly Review' articles. You know that your principal is equally unable to deny it. But you try to open a side-door of escape for him by suggesting that though the 'Quarterly' articles 'were in some sense Mr Gladstone's,' it is 'possible that the then editor of that Review may be more or less responsible for many of the passages.'

"It is 'extremely improper,' it seems, for me to attribute to Mr Gladstone articles which he actually wrote; but it is not improper for you to attempt to palm them off, 'more or less,' upon the editor of the publication in which they appeared. You have searched the articles, and your critical judgment tells you that they are the work of one man; that being so, you proceed to ascribe them, by innuendo, to another.

"What does your supposition involve? That the editor of the 'Quarterly Review' inserted in Mr Gladstone's articles not merely a sentence here and there, but whole pages, and that he kept on doing this time after time, Mr Gladstone consenting, and never once disavowing the interpolated pages, any more than he ventures in his own name to disavow them now. Mr Gladstone, a man of great eminence in public life, allowed his articles to be turned inside out and upside down, and patiently saw introduced into them long arguments and emphatic statements which were at deadly issue with his own convictions; and yet, from that day to this, he never uttered a word of remonstrance or protest. That is your theory, and I say that it is without a precedent in the whole annals of literature. Do you think you can get 'the then' editor of the 'Quarterly Review' to lend it any countenance? Try him, and let us hear of the result.

"What it all comes to is this. There is nothing improper in Mr Gladstone condemning, down to his fiftieth year, certain well-defined principles as destructive of the best interests of his country, and then, when those principles pointed the way to power, turning suddenly round, adopting them as his own, and embodying them in legislation. And there is nothing improper in insinuating that Mr Gladstone did not write the whole of the articles which are known to be his, but that one of the meekest of editors foisted into them sentiments and arguments of his own, as the cuckoo lays its egg in the hedge-sparrow's nest. But it is 'extremely improper' to bring home to Mr Gladstone his own words and deeds, and to insist upon holding him accountable for them.

"These new illustrations of the Gladstonian system of ethics I will take care to include in the next edition of my book.—I am, Sir, &c., L. J. JENNINGS.

"*February* 15*th*."

To this the 'Spectator' replied, in effect, that I was not worthy of notice. That I did not require to be told; I feel it deeply. But what about the *facts?* Are they not worthy of notice? It is with them that Mr Gladstone and his apologists have to reckon. If they are able to show that I have misrepresented anything, I advise them to do it at once, for this book is making its way in the country very rapidly, as is proved by the hundreds of letters of praise and encouragement which I receive from all classes, and by three editions having been called for within six weeks. If any one who holds a brief for Mr Gladstone can fairly meet the evidence here presented, I say to him, as Hamlet said to the player, "Leave thy damnable faces, and *begin.*"

8*th March* 1887.

PREFACE.

THE main object of the following pages is to present the great central facts connected with Mr Gladstone's public career in an intelligible form, and to bring them into a moderate compass, so that they may become better known to many who cannot follow political history minutely, and especially to the working men of the country, for whom I have chiefly written.

I have been preparing notes and other materials for this work, with all the care and diligence that I could exercise, for many years past. And I venture to request all who read this brief history to disregard the sweeping contradictions and general assertions which may be brought against it, and to ask them-

selves these simple questions: Did the events which are recorded here really happen? Were these words spoken or written? Is it true that Mr Gladstone said or did this or that, at such and such a time? These are the points which it is material for the reader to be able to decide. In the work itself there is indicated the sure way of testing its accuracy. Every quotation or reference has been carefully verified, and at the foot of each page, the volume or other publication is specified which contains the original. Moreover, the originals are not hard to get at—they may be consulted in almost every Free Library in the country. Many of the quotations are of the highest importance, and not one of them can be passed over unread without loss. Some, from Mr Gladstone's political writings, have never been republished before, for reasons which will be understood without much explanation.

On these principles, then, let everything in the book be judged. I have honestly

sought to bring out the truth, and my labour will not be in vain if intelligent and fair-minded men are led to inquire further into Mr Gladstone's career for themselves.

LONDON, *January* 1887.

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I.

MR GLADSTONE'S PRINCIPLES

I.

MR GLADSTONE'S PRINCIPLES.

From whatever point of view we may approach the study of Mr Gladstone's career, it will be admitted that he forms one of the most remarkable and interesting figures in political history. There is nothing quite like the story of his life to be found in any other time or in any other nation. His personal successes were extraordinary, but they were not so surprising as his administrative and legislative failures, nor were these failures so astonishing as the readiness with which the people forgot them. Over and over again he committed mistakes which everybody admitted would have been ruinous to any other public man. No one else could have come out almost unscathed from the enormous disasters wrought by his policy in Egypt. The

Dual Note, the determination to "overthrow the Mahdi at Khartoum," the slaughters in the Soudan, the desertion and death of Gordon, the endless perils entailed upon the country by the want of foresight, and even of common prudence, displayed at every step—this, or a quarter of this, would have overwhelmed any other Minister with eternal disgrace. Mr Gladstone contrived to explain it all away. He even persuaded a large section of his countrymen that in some mysterious manner he was the injured person. His followers believed in his wisdom and judgment as firmly as ever. Nothing that he said or did surprised them. Throughout his entire life he has accustomed the nation to look for sudden reversals of policy. There is scarcely any principle of government which he has not alternately advocated and condemned. Something may be found in his voluminous writings and speeches to support every conceivable side of every question. He has passed from one phase of opinion to another with a rapidity that has almost baffled the eye which attempted to follow him. Yet it cannot be said that he lost the public confidence to

any serious extent until he made his celebrated capitulation to the Parnellites. The English people may not be the most acute politicians in the world, but there seems to be no limit to the faith which they repose in the public man who has once succeeded in winning their regard.

It is proposed in these pages to trace Mr Gladstone's career in its general outlines, and to give an account of his opinions so far as they have affected the history of the country. It would be labour lost to go back to the period when he was described as "the rising hope of those stern and unbending Tories" who "abhorred" Sir Robert Peel while they followed him. Mr Gladstone has wholly repudiated that part of his life; but it is highly important to ascertain, at least approximately, when he became a Liberal. On this point there exists great misconception, which Mr Gladstone has done much to confirm. At Leeds, on the 7th of October 1881, he spoke of himself as having then been "for thirty-five years . . . in the ranks of the Liberal party"—that is to say, since 1846. The diligent inquirer into Mr Gladstone's career will soon learn that his statements with refer-

ence to himself must not be received without strict investigation. He does not, of course, intend to mislead; but his recollection of events, as it will presently be shown in innumerable instances, is inherently bad, and it is always unconsciously tinged by the circumstances amid which he is speaking at the moment. His past is modified or moulded to suit the present. At Leeds, in 1881, enthusiasm and excitement carried him away, and he declared that he had been a Liberal since 1846. Yet it was in that very year that he received the appointment of Colonial Secretary; it was not till 1847 that he was elected as "an unbending Tory" for Oxford University. Another point of departure must evidently be found. According to one of his biographers,[1] "Mr Gladstone has himself stated that, so late as 1851, he had not formally left the Tory party." It is quite clear that this statement, so far as it goes, is correct,—for in 1858 Mr Gladstone canvassed the county of Flint for Sir Stephen Glynne, who was a strong supporter of Lord Derby's Government; he accepted from Lord Derby a

[1] Mr G. Barnett Smith, Life of Mr Gladstone, vol. i. p. 229.

mission to the Ionian Islands in the same year; and in 1859 he voted in support of the Derby Administration. It will be shown, in fact, that he was pressing extreme Tory doctrine upon the public down to his fiftieth year—an age when most men are held responsible for their opinions and their acts. Between September 1856 and April 1859 there appeared in the 'Quarterly Review' several very striking articles, which were generally attributed at the time to Mr Gladstone. He certainly was aware of this, and he never sought to deny the responsibility of the authorship of essays which provoked much discussion when they appeared, and which now possess great historical value. He did not, indeed, include them in the 'Gleanings' which he published in 1879; but in the preface to that collection it was explained that "essays of a controversial kind, whether in politics or religion," were purposely omitted. Mr Gladstone may also have had other reasons for keeping his own counsel about these productions. They cannot, however, be omitted by any future biographer from the record of his life and opinions.

It is a vital part of the history of the times that Mr Gladstone, until he was near fifty, maintained with all his force that Tory principles were the only safe principles on which this country could be governed. Why he did not take office under Lord Derby in 1858 has never been authoritatively explained. There were many who fully believed that he was steering in that direction even in 1855. The late Lord Shaftesbury recorded in his diary on the 6th of February 1855, "I hear that Gladstone has long exhibited a desire to return to Lord Derby, and I believe it. He would then be leader of the House of Commons, and be virtually Prime Minister."[1] It must be evident, however, to any one who now surveys the field, that Mr Gladstone could not, at the time in question, have become leader of the Conservative party in the House of Commons. Mr Disraeli stood in the way; and although he was then underrated by his own side, Mr Gladstone had measured his strength, and knew well that he was a most formidable antagonist. If, indeed, there had been no Disraeli in 1858, the

[1] Life of the Seventh Earl of Shaftesbury, vol. ii. p. 490.

Liberals would probably have had to look elsewhere than to Mr Gladstone for a leader. He was heartily in sympathy with Tory principles and Tory leaders; he detested the Radicals. His education, his disposition, the bent of his mind, his natural tastes—all inclined him towards Conservatism. We need not rest upon conjecture for support of this view. It is amply confirmed, as we shall presently see, by his own writings. But the chief place in the Conservative party had already practically fallen to another. After Peel's desertion in 1846, Lord George Bentinck was called, not by his own wish, to place himself at the head of the betrayed and demoralised ranks of the Tories. Upon his sudden death in September 1848, Mr Disraeli stepped into his place, for there was no one else competent to fill it; and in 1852, when Lord Derby came into power, the post of Chancellor of the Exchequer was naturally and properly taken by the man who had done so much for his party, and revealed the possession of such transcendent abilities. There was no one strong enough—even if there had been the inclination in any quarter—to depose

Mr Disraeli in 1858 for the sake of providing a place for Mr Gladstone.

There was no room for the two men in the same party, in the same branch of the Legislature, and therefore Mr Gladstone continued to drift about in the orbit of the other Peelites, although he had very little hope of their future. He predicted that they would soon "have either absolutely disappeared" or "become practically inappreciable." That he should have looked round for some more promising alliance is not surprising, considering the gloomy view he took of his prospects. The Peelites, he wrote,[1] were among the greatest "anomalies and solecisms of the Lower House;" they tended "to prolong the existing state of general weakness and the relaxation in party organisation;" they were not "powerful either in their numbers or in the general favour;" they operated as "solvents of party connection in a manner and degree for which their mere numbers or personal qualities would not account." And he then proceeded, in a passage to which after-events imparted

[1] Quarterly Review, article on "The Declining Efficiency of Parliament," September 1856, pp. 565, 566.

extraordinary weight and meaning, to explain the process by which the Peelites might be converted :—

"It is plain that those who are now disassociated, either wholly or partially, and either on the one side of the House or on the other, from the leading parties, ought, if they are ever again to be found in the ranks, to be found in those ranks where their sympathies principally lie ; and the question which ranks those are, must commonly receive its answer, partly indeed from the tempers of individuals, but chiefly from the course of public affairs, and from the tendency of this great question or of that to grow for the time to a paramount and commanding importance in its bearing on the interests of the country."

The principle of "opportunism" in politics, the only principle to which Mr Gladstone has been undeviatingly faithful, could scarcely have found a more unqualified or more frank exponent. While watching the growth of "this or that" great question in popularity, he deemed it advisable to keep on good terms with the party which seemed likely to have the command of power. In 1853 he joined the Coalition Government of Lord Aberdeen. This did not in any degree imply that he was waver-

ing in his Toryism. He did not like the Whigs, but it was necessary to act with some organisation and cease to be a mere "solvent." We shall see how it was that Lord Aberdeen's Ministry failed to supply the permanent connection sought for. After his fall, it was thought that Lord Lansdowne would form a Ministry. Mr Gladstone made the following statement in a letter to Mr Hayward (October 22, 1872):[1] "Lord Lansdowne sent for me, and asked if I would remain.[2] He said that if I would, he would proceed with his arrangements. But I declined (an act which I soon and long repented of), and, whether for that or other reasons, he desisted from his endeavour." He consented, however, to retain office for a short time under Lord Palmerston. Then he seceded, and supported the Conservatives. Eight months after the formation of Lord Derby's second Ministry, he expressed the strongest approval of that Government, and the strongest condemnation of its Liberal pre-

[1] The Hayward Letters, vol. ii. p. 243.

[2] Mr Gladstone had been Chancellor of the Exchequer under Lord Aberdeen.

decessor. Lord Derby had done well; he could point to the "regular, the undisputed, let us add, the generally successful administration of public affairs;" he could afford to "challenge a comparison" with Lord Palmerston's Ministry; he had given "an effective pledge of future economy by foregoing the command of that potent instrument," the income-tax. "Lord Derby courageously and wisely undertook the task before him, and his undertaking it has resulted in benefit and satisfaction to the country at large."[1]

He not only approved of the Ministry, but of the views which it sought to embody in legislation. We rely once more solely upon his own testimony for proof of this. What Mr Gladstone believed in 1857-58, was doubtless a matter of indifference to Mr Gladstone in 1886; but it can never be a matter of indifference to the historian. There is something much more important at stake than a mere issue of personal consistency. The question is whether the evidence of an eyewitness of a series of events is not better, more likely to be true, more to be

[1] Quarterly Review, vol. civ. pp. 515, 541, &c.

trusted in every way, than the evidence of a highly prejudiced person who speaks long after the events, and who has the strongest motive for misrepresenting them. Let it be clearly borne in mind that Mr Gladstone was in his fiftieth year when he carefully reviewed the claims which each party had to public confidence. He gave judgment in favour of the Conservatives. It will scarcely be denied that he was as well able to form a fair opinion of men and measures then as he was when removed from them by a gap of twenty or thirty years. Nor will it be denied that the discrimination and insight of a man of fifty is quite as likely to be sound as when he is seventy or seventy-five. In 1856 and 1858, Mr Gladstone had no record of past inconsistencies to explain away; he merely described what he had seen and known. It would be a great injustice to him and to others to dismiss his contemporary evidence as worthless, and to prefer the scattered, confused, and vindictive recollections of his old age.

What he told the world when his mental powers were all in their fullest vigour, was that Radicalism was a force which threatened to

bring great misfortunes upon the nation, while the Conservative party alone had the power and the willingness to defend our highest interests. Perhaps it may in after-times be held that in this as in many other instances Mr Gladstone helped to bring to pass his own forecasts and predictions; but at any rate, his language will always deserve the most careful attention. In treating of the Radical school, which he afterwards joined and led, he remarked:[1]—

"With this latter school the removal of abuses is mainly a means to an end, and that end is a fundamental change in the character of our institutions. *Their aim is to centralise administration, to break up the masses of landed property,* to discountenance the unpaid service which among us is so closely associated with the influence of hereditary station, to concentrate political power in the towns, *to discredit the ancient traditions of government,* to prevent the Church from gaining real strength and union by good laws, to make the franchise irresponsible, and the representative a delegate; and when by these means the sapping process has been brought to sufficient ripeness, then to open the batteries, which until the proper time will remain judiciously masked, *against the independence*

[1] Quarterly Review, January 1857, article on "Prospects, Political and Financial," p. 268.

of the House of Lords, the connection between religion and the civil institutions of the country, and whatever else may still remain open to attack and worth attacking."

It would not be easy to present a more concise summary of his own subsequent work. In 1885, Mr Gladstone forewarned the country that the Liberal party could not be trusted to deal with the Irish question unless it was placed in power by a majority over all other parties. But the people of England have not always understood Mr Gladstone. His warning that he and the Liberal party could not be trusted to deal with the Irish question unless an overwhelming majority was given to him, did not reveal the fact that he was meditating a surrender to the disloyal faction in Ireland. So, in 1857, when he told the country that the independence of the House of Lords would be attacked, no one imagined that he would inspire the attack. He had once—in 1834 — bitterly assailed the Ministry of Lord Grey for dragging the House of Lords into a controversy about "legislative measures that were submitted to their consideration in

their independent capacity,"—that other branch of the Legislature, he added, being "independent of this branch of the Legislature, and as capable of exercising a sound and useful judgment." "Nothing," he declared, "could be more indiscreet, nothing more indecent," than such conduct. Yet this was the precise course of conduct which he pursued on many subsequent occasions, and especially in 1884. His Ministry was discredited by the Egyptian scandals and by the Gordon massacre, and to go before the country in that plight was simply to court ruin. The County Franchise Bill was hurriedly brought in, unaccompanied by a Redistribution Bill. The Lords objected, and Mr Gladstone summoned his followers to arms. He threw out allusions which his supporters well knew how to interpret. He did not say very much at any time, when one looked superficially at his words; but they conveyed an infinite deal of meaning. When at Edinburgh on the 30th of August 1884, he remarked, in his most solemn and emphatic tones, that "if an hereditary Chamber deliberately involves itself in that conflict, and perseveres in it, it is tread-

ing the pathway which leads to an issue that I will not describe, but which is not that of safety or of honour," it is little likely that the enemies of that Chamber would fail to see in what direction he was pointing, especially as the words just quoted formed but the introduction of a long and envenomed attack on the House of Lords.

At a meeting at Carlisle on the 26th September, he further denounced the House as "the great depositary of irresponsible power," and advised it to "seek its safety and its welfare." At the opening of the autumn session of 1884 (October 23d), Mr Gladstone again contrived to make himself understood, though confining himself chiefly to suggestive hints. "Let gentlemen," he said, "who are desirous of combining redistribution with franchise, *take care lest they combine something more critical than either with them both;*" and then he proceeded to suggest that the Conservatives wished "to raise the question of organic change in the constitution of the country." On the 24th of September, at Perth, he had also thrown out dark threats of "organic changes," of a "most menacing conflict," and had said that there was

a great disposition to raise the question whether the power at present enjoyed by the House of Lords is not a power too great to be held by persons irresponsible for its exercise." And he added: "The question would be raised whether hereditary power and irresponsible power could any longer be tolerated in its present shape, and the country would be embarked in a controversy of which I will only say—(A voice—"End 'em")—that I fear it would be bitter. I know it might be long, but it could end only one way, in great and extensive changes in the present balance of the Constitution." He concluded by warning the Lords to "be wise in time." In the House of Commons he used much the same language under cover of deprecating it, as proceeding from the Conservatives. In advancing into a new field of policy, Mr Gladstone's preliminary step has always been to impute to his opponents the very course which he had secretly resolved to carry out. Before his great surrender to the Irish in 1886, he repeatedly insinuated that the Conservative party had decided on submission to Mr Parnell. Under cover, therefore, of a rebuke to the Con-

servatives for trying to destroy the House of Lords, he dropped the phrase, which was soon eagerly welcomed in all Radical circles, about working "an organic change in the Constitution of the country." One of his chief organs in the press threw off all disguise. The Radicals, it said, were now convinced "that a cry against the Peers would be a trump-card at a general election. . . . If too much nonsense is indulged in, they will make short work of the Opposition by asking the country to draw the teeth and pare the claws of the Peers, once for all."[1] It so happened, however, that when the elections came in 1885, it was found that the "trump-card" of the Radicals had a good deal to do with their losing the game.

It must be remembered that the point on which Mr Gladstone raised this controversy had been decided long before by himself. All that the House of Lords asked was that a Redistribution Bill should accompany the extension of the Franchise Bill. It held that one measure could not properly be passed without the other. This was the very principle which

[1] Pall Mall Gazette, October 23, 1884.

Mr Gladstone laid down in 1866. "Nothing," he said, in moving the second reading of his Reform Bill on the 12th of April,[1] "could be more contemptible and base than the conduct of a Government which could give out, with a view of enlisting the generous confidence of its supporters, that it would deal with the subject of Reform, and would stand or fall by its propositions, and which all the while could silently exclude from the scope of their declaration all portions of that question, except only the reduction of the franchise, though among such portions we find one, I mean the distribution of seats, only second in importance to that of the franchise itself." Thus then, in 1884, Mr Gladstone set on foot a violent agitation for the destruction of the House of Lords—or, to use his own words, for an "organic change in the Constitution"—because that House declined to adopt a course which, in 1866, he had expressly stigmatised as "contemptible and base."[2] Every principle which at one time he

[1] Revised edition of his 'Speeches on Parliamentary Reform in 1866,' p. 122.

[2] The two Bills were eventually placed before Parliament together.

has earnestly defended, he has attacked with equal earnestness at another. Concerning the county franchise itself, he had once written that it was based on property, and he contended that it ought to remain so. If the system gave power to the landlord over voters, "we have yet to learn," he declared, "that it is in practice either excessive or misused."[1] And in 1866, in moving the second reading of his own Reform Bill, he discouraged the idea of a large admission of the working classes to the franchise. "Changes," he said, "that effect sudden and extensive transfer of power, are attended by great temptations to the weakness of human nature; and however high our opinion may be of the labouring classes, or of any other classes of the community, I do not believe that it would be right to place such a temptation within the reach of any one among them."[2] It would be difficult to express a fundamental distrust of the people in a more concise or more emphatic form. And these views were

[1] Article in the Quarterly Review, vol. ci. p. 583.

[2] Speeches on Reform in 1866, revised and published by Mr Gladstone himself, p. 114.

avowed, not in early youth or in haste, but at the age of fifty-seven, and in a careful speech in the House of Commons, subsequently prepared by his own hand for publication. Obviously, then, he became a Radical very slowly, with great reluctance, and under the influence of motives from which time has stripped away all disguises.

It is doubtful whether he was ever a Radical at heart, although he thought proper to adopt Radical measures. In 1857 he put upon record his opinion that the Radical "is essentially a brawler,"[1] "naturally disposed to uproar;" while as for the whole body of the Liberals, "it has become the cardinal principle of that party never voluntarily to surrender office." Mr Gladstone went on to describe the result of that determination to keep office at any price: "The immediate and inevitable consequence is, that they must work for and adhere to any Minister who thinks fit to wear their badge and to recruit from their ranks, even though

[1] *Vide* his article in the Quarterly Review, "Prospects, Political and Financial," January 1857, vol. ci. p. 263 *et seq.*

he may reject their favourite watchwords, and cast every one of their pledges to the winds." Nothing can be more clear than that Mr Gladstone had at this time carefully studied the conditions with which he would have to deal. There was but one road to the chief seat of power, and that was through Radicalism. Yet all the principles of Radicalism were nothing less than odious and base in Mr Gladstone's eyes.

Let any one who entertains a doubt on that point reflect well upon the following declarations made by Mr Gladstone when he was in his forty-ninth year. He deplored bitterly the tendency of the House of Commons "to degenerate into an assembly of municipal and parochial minds" — to become a collection of "little luminaries, fitter for a municipal chamber than for the senate of the most extended empire in the world."[1] In another article he again regrets the existence of an evil which the remainder of his life was devoted to increasing:—

"These things are notorious to all those observers of parliamentary proceedings who, like ourselves, cannot

[1] Quarterly Review, vol. ci. p. 564.

shake off the belief that our old system of government was in the main good, generous, and effective; and who view with deep regret that undue predominance of merely local ideas in a very large proportion of the town constituencies, which threatens, particularly on the Liberal side of the House, to demolish the old system without rearing up a new one, and to leave the government of the greatest empire in the world to be the prize of a scramble among a motley crowd of eager, contentious, and egotistical mediocrities." [1]

Such was Mr Gladstone's opinion of the party which he afterwards led. The party of which he was soon to be the avowed foe and the inveterate detractor, he described in a passage of the greatest historical importance:[2]—

"They [the Conservatives] earned their character fairly, after the manner of Englishmen—that is, they earned it by hard work. They persuaded and convinced the country that they best understood and could best manage its affairs. While they retained a characteristic indisposition to raise abstract questions, or to attempt changes in the Constitution, they placed their political creed on its true basis by showing that the desire of practical progress was with them neither an extorted homage to overruling necessity, nor a Sunday suit to be worn upon the hust-

[1] Quarterly Review, vol. ci. p. 267.

[2] The ensuing quotations are from the Quarterly Review for January 1857, pp. 269-272.

ings from election to election, and buried in the intervals between them—but a genuine, positive result of their Conservative opinions. The Opposition which came to power in 1841 took care to imprint upon the popular mind that now, at least, the most loyal children and the most resolute defenders of our institutions were likewise the fiercest foes to the abuses that from time to time eat into them. Partisans we may be called; but we believe history will emblazon it as a real advance in the art of practical politics, that the energies of improvement should have attained their highest vigour at the very moment when preserving instincts were known to be the strongest, and the sentiment of security blended in and grew along with the consciousness of progress. Lord Derby and Sir James Graham, Lord Aberdeen and Lord Lyndhurst, each played distinguished parts in that not yet forgotten scene of the historic drama; we are confident that, amidst the noisy barrenness and the boastful poltroonery of the present epoch, these eminent persons must one and all look back with warm and lively satisfaction upon that portion of their political career."

The history of the Conservative party, after Peel's death, could scarcely be properly understood without a study of Mr Gladstone's contributions to it. We have seen that he foresaw very clearly the extreme measures which the Radicals would demand, although no divination taught him that he would be the leader of the

Radicals in the perilous crisis which alarmed him so much when viewed at a distance. He was converted slowly; and his conversions were usually simultaneous with a change in the direction of public opinion which indicated the path to power. This may have been a mere coincidence; but the life of no statesman of ancient or modern times is so rich in such coincidences. Superficial observers may almost be forgiven if they decide that the method which brought the conversion and the reward so close to each other must have been based upon scientific calculation rather than upon accident. At any rate, Mr Gladstone's review of the Conservative party from 1846 to 1857 is in the highest degree instructive. He vindicated it from the charge of obstructing reforms, and of opposing Protection to Free Trade as a party issue. He extolled the leaders of the party for their justice and patriotism, and for their economical management of the finances. His language is far too important to be condensed or touched, and it is therefore given here word for word:—

"It would not have been likely at any time that the Conservative politicians of the country should have ac-

quired this commanding position unless it had also been deserved. Least of all could this have happened at a time when they had had to begin the upward movement from the lowest point of depression recorded in their history; for in 1833 they were but a handful, and in the debates of that year will be found recorded the words in which Sir Robert Peel disclaimed all pretensions to lead a party, and was contented to place his individual exertions at the service of the State. What, then, were the attributes that made the statesmen of 1841 and their party so strong in the public estimation? In answering this question we must dispose of an assertion founded either in error or in malevolence. It is most untrue that they owed their ascendancy to Protection. Death had marked the Melbourne Ministry for its own, long before Lord Melbourne had in the least particular qualified his memorable declaration that the man must be mad who could propose the repeal of the Corn Laws. The manner in which that Government, when at its last gasp, convulsively pronounced the words 'fixed duty,' served indeed to deepen the discredit into which it had fallen, and may have turned half-a-dozen or a dozen elections that would not otherwise have been won by their opponents; but the utmost that it did was to add a few tar-barrels to a bonfire that would have been but little less brilliant without them. The character of the Conservative party was founded on positive, not on negative qualities. What were they? To describe them in one word, a negative form may be the most convenient. They were in all respects as nearly as possible the contradictories of those propensities which impel the motion and trace the career

of the present Government. One of its cardinal principles was strict discipline and unity among its members —not only a salutary misliking of open questions, but a determined repression of all those erratic tendencies which now exhibit to us Lords of the Admiralty making speeches against admirals, and a Prime Minister giving countenance and confidence to both. Another of them was the resolute avoidance to promise what it did not mean to use every effort to perform, instead of combining the facility which promises everything with the levity that never fights an uphill battle like Alma, or a battle against odds like Inkermann, for anything. Those of our readers who either shared or observed the proceedings of the House of Commons at that time, will not fail to remember with what tenacity, nay, with what obduracy of purpose, even in the teeth of the most formidable combinations, Sir Robert Peel, with Lord Derby and Sir James Graham by his side, clung as a Minister to his announced intentions. And on the rare occasions when the Government withdrew a measure, there was no attempt either to hide the miscarriage by artifice, or to demoralise the Parliament by laughing, and causing it to laugh, at its inability to discharge its duty to the nation. That respect at the Foreign Office for the just rights of other countries, which we never hesitated to acknowledge in Lord Aberdeen, was combined with respect for the rights of this country in the Ministry at large, and particularly for its right to be economically, vigorously, and, above all, to be earnestly served. Thus the general proceedings of the Government were marked by discipline, firmness, hostility to ostentations; a spirit of peace pre-

vailed, and the patriotism of those days was not thought to require an unconditional belief that beyond the shores of England the world is peopled only with a miserable alternation of fools and knaves. The laws were improved, commerce enlarged, education extended, the resources of the Church made more productive, authority upheld in Ireland, under every discouragement, we are concerned to add, from the Opposition, against the menace, and not remote menace, of physical force; the estimates were kept down, the goodwill of every country in the globe conciliated without the sacrifice of British honour; the two great disputes with America, where the inflaming and exasperating hand of Lord Palmerston had been previously at work, were brought to a peaceful termination. Colonial differences and discussions stood at a mere fraction of what they had been under Lord Melbourne's Government, and of what they again became under Lord Grey. The balance of expenditure against income was converted into a balance of income against expenditure; a strict economy was maintained in every department of the State by the wise and cautious firmness of Mr Goulburn; and the only period since 1842 when there has been a surplus of revenue sufficient to allow Parliament to part, if it thought fit, with the income-tax, was in the year 1845, under the Conservative administration."[1]

It fell in with Mr Gladstone's purpose afterwards to declare that the Conservative

[1] Quarterly Review, vol. ci. (1857), pp. 269-272, article "Prospects, Political and Financial."

party, during the very sixteen years treated of in these passages, afflicted the country with the direst evils — that it was indifferent to the welfare of the people, extravagant, reckless, unprincipled. At which period are we to accept his evidence? The facts had not altered. Mr Gladstone knew at least as much about them when he was an actor in the midst of them, as he did when his memory was failing and his powers of observation were deadened. No fair-minded man will pretend for a moment that the evidence of 1857 and 1858 is to be set aside as worthless because Mr Gladstone, a long time afterwards, "changed his mind." He had reasons for changing his mind. But when the evidence was given, there was no party or personal object to lead him to tell anything but the truth, as he apprehended it. He did not feel himself bound to discredit a party which he had deserted, and to flatter a party which promised to make him its leader. In 1857 he uttered his real convictions; at a later date those convictions, in common with most others which he held, became adapted to circumstances.

His strictly independent testimony on the Free Trade controversy is equally remarkable. Few persons are aware that he ever gave it, and yet it is among the most memorable statements ever deliberately put by Mr Gladstone before his countrymen. It is not too much to hope that when once the following passage has been rescued from unmerited oblivion, it will never again be forgotten in England, or, indeed, by any public writer in Europe:—

"Twenty years ago the Liberal and Conservative parties had taken opposite ground on a multitude of great public questions. Most of those causes of difference have disappeared by the settlement of the questions to which they referred. *It is not true* that the triumphs have been all one way, and that the more Conservative part of the nation have disposed of the contest *simply by surrendering the posts they defended. The great question of Protection and Free Trade was at no time really a question between the Conservative and the Liberal parties.* If franchises have been enlarged, if corporations have been reformed, if Dissenters have been relieved, if education has been more powerfully aided, mainly through the efforts of the Liberal party, on the other hand ecclesiastical property has been defended, the independence of the House of Lords upheld, the constitution of the House of Commons shielded from violent and organic changes, the *relative rights and attitude of classes main-*

tained, principally through the energy and determination of Conservative politicians."[1]

Now these statements could not have been true in 1857, and false ten years afterwards. Black remains black, and white remains white, no matter how many times a man may "change his mind" about those colours. Mr Gladstone spent many years of his life in teaching the people that the Conservative party kept up Protection for selfish ends, and that in so doing it exhibited a wilful and culpable indifference to the best interests of the nation. How is that view to be reconciled with his calm and sober statements in 1856-57? This is not an abstract theme upon which we may change our views with the moon. It is a question of fact. If a man tells us one day that the world is round, and the next day that it is flat, we know what to think of him. The only point open to discussion in Mr Gladstone's statement is: at which period was it that he was entitled to belief,—in 1857, when he was free and impartial; or in 1866 and onwards,

[1] Article on "The Declining Efficiency of Parliament," Quarterly Review, vol. xcix. p. 562.

when he was straining every nerve to secure or keep the leadership of the Liberal party?

At first, as we have seen, his movement towards the Whigs was of a halting kind. He was not sure of his ground. The "Venetian oligarchy" looked upon him with distrust. He returned aversion for distrust. The Whig, he wrote,[1] "has his merits, and perhaps he somewhat overrates them; but his besetting sin lies in the opinion that he has an hereditary right to power, a vested interest in the offices of the State — or, if not to the whole of them, yet that at least all the dishes that are arrayed upon the table are predestined to his single maw, while Gentiles and proselytes of the gate are permitted to pick up the crumbs." There was one "proselyte at the gate" who was destined to bring the Whigs to a more reasonable frame of mind. But it could only be done by arraying against them another force within the same party—the force of Radicalism. Mr Gladstone was preparing silently for that great strategic stroke. It involved the sacrifice of all his most cherished convictions; yet the goal

[1] Quarterly Review, vol. ci. p. 263.

had to be reached, and there was no other way to it. In 1865 it became evident that Lord Palmerston could not last much longer. Lord John Russell could not hope to compete with Mr Gladstone for the reversion of the Premiership. From that time the political destination of Mr Gladstone was never for a moment doubtful.

There have been moments in his life when, either in a sudden outburst of frankness or in a mood of cynicism, he has to some extent supplied a key to his own past. In practice he has defended the principle that there should be a Statute of Limitations for the utterances of public men. In theory he has professed his sympathy with the opinion that it is not seemly in a statesman to be seen advocating one opinion to-day and its opposite to-morrow. In his 'Chapter of Autobiography' (p. 10) he says:—

"In theory, at least, and for others, I am myself a purist with respect to what touches the consistency of statesmen. Change of opinion, in those to whose judgment the public looks more or less to assist its own, is an evil to the country, although a much smaller evil than their persistence in a course which they know to be wrong. It is not always to be blamed. But it is

always to be watched with vigilance; always to be challenged, and put on its trial."

But it will be observed that there were several important limitations in this avowal. Mr Gladstone declared that he valued consistency, but he did not commit himself to anything more than that he valued it "*in theory*" —and—"*for others.*" Consistency, in theory, may be good for others, but Mr Gladstone appears in this passage to claim, as he has always exercised, a special licence and indulgence. In 1845 he paid a strange and unique tribute to his admiration for consistency by resigning the office he held under Sir Robert Peel, because "the views of the Government on the Maynooth Grant, with which he" agreed, were "at variance with his formerly published work on Church and State." One such sacrifice may serve to embellish a career; a repetition of it might perhaps be regarded as Quixotic. Yet here again there occurs another of those remarkable coincidences to which reference has been made. It cannot be altogether overlooked that when Mr Gladstone resigned his office in 1845, the Ministry itself was in

great peril. It had offended the country party, and it had disappointed the main body of the public. The chief members of the Ministry evidently looked for speedy defeat. "I am aware," wrote Sir James Graham to Mr Croker, a few weeks after Mr Gladstone's retirement, "that our country gentlemen are out of humour, and that the existence of the Government is endangered by their present temper and recent proceedings. . . . We are scouted as traitors. . . . The country gentlemen cannot be more ready to give us the death-blow than we are prepared to receive it."[1] The virtual alliance with Mr Cobden and the Corn-Law League saved the Ministry; but this flank movement against its adversaries was as little foreseen by Mr Gladstone as by the more eminent of Peel's colleagues. Between February and December the storm had blown over, and Mr Gladstone resumed office in the latter month. Sir Robert Peel had undergone his memorable conversion on the Corn-Law question in the previous October.[2]

[1] Croker Memoirs, vol. iii. p. 31 (second edition).

[2] Sir R. Peel's Memoirs, Part III., vol. ii.

The lesson of these events was never lost upon Mr Gladstone.

In 1878[1] he remarked, with a curious flash of insight, "My future, I think, is a matter with regard to which I am not able—after what I consider my past is—to say much." On the 25th of November 1879, in a speech at Mid-Lothian, he was apparently about to make a very similar confession, but he was again a candidate for power at that time; whereas in 1878 he had "finally retired." He told his Mid-Lothian audience that he had sat with the Duke of Buccleuch in the Cabinet of Sir Robert Peel. "That," he added, "is now nearly forty years ago. Since that time, I frankly avow that I have changed various opinions;" and then, as if fearing that this might be an imprudent admission, he continued—"I should say, that I have learned various lessons." Archdeacon Denison puts the matter in a somewhat different way. He tells us[2] that those who knew Mr Gladstone best in the earlier part of

[1] Speech to a deputation from the "Leeds 400," March 28, 1878.

[2] In his pamphlet on "Mr Gladstone," 1885.

his career, regarded with much foreboding that "conscience" of which the world has heard so often. Thus, Augustus Page Saunders, afterwards Dean of Peterborough, pronounced upon him, as early as 1832, the following sinister prediction: "His conscience is so tender, he will never go straight." In 1860, Dr Lake, Dean of Durham, said of him, "I think his intellect can persuade his conscience of anything." Mr W. E. Forster said, long afterwards, in the House of Commons, "He can persuade most people of most things, but above all, he can persuade himself of anything." Future generations may not marvel at this peculiarity of his intellect, but they will be at a loss to account for the confidence which a practical nation placed in its owner. They will look upon his course, strewn thickly with failures and disasters, and marvel that he should still have been called upon, time after time, to take the direction of affairs. They will contrast his repeated and vehement avowals that the Conservative party was the best fitted to govern the country, with the envenomed calumnies which he subsequently poured out upon it. They will study

his declarations made in the prime of his days, concerning Church, Trade, Protection, and Ireland, and compare them with the acts of his later years—they will have before their eyes the needless sacrifices of the Crimean war, the encouragement given to Russia when she was aiming a mortal blow at England, the betrayal of the colonists in South Africa, the blind and reckless war in Egypt and the Soudan, the sacrifice of Gordon, the massacre of our miserable allies, the attempt to buy off Irish opposition by a concession which would have been fatal to the empire, and the subsequent efforts to stir up sectional strife in all parts of the country—and marking this, they will see little cause for wonder that under Mr Gladstone's sway the power and influence of England declined, while internal divisions and animosities weakened her energies, and laid a train of future evils which no man could estimate.

II.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF RADICALISM

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EVERYBODY admits that it is not only justifiable, but eminently right and wise, on the part of a statesman, to modify his opinions or his policy in conformity with overruling circumstances of the hour. Pitt and Canning—not to go farther back—exercised that freedom; so, in a far greater degree and in a much bolder manner, did Sir Robert Peel. More than once Peel totally reversed his course without a word of warning either to friends or foes. Even Wellington, the most consistent and inflexible of public men, yielded to pressure from without. But Mr Gladstone, in this respect, far outstripped any or all of his predecessors. The one great lesson which a careful investigation of his career will be likely to suggest to young

and ambitious men is, that fixed principles are a barrier to success, and that the more lightly equipped a political combatant may be when he goes into the arena, the better are his chances of victory. There have been times when Mr Gladstone has seemed, not so much to model his opinions upon circumstances, as to depend upon circumstances for the formation of his opinions. It is true that he has sometimes sustained rude shocks in his attempts to judge of the state of popular feeling. He was deceived in 1874, and he was still more seriously mistaken in 1886. But even in 1886 he acted in accordance with his invariable rule. His calculation was—as the mysterious communications between Hawarden and Leeds in 1885 sufficiently showed—that the Liberal party would not dare to oppose his surrender to Mr Parnell. Mr Chamberlain, the "uninspired memorandum" pointed out, was more than half pledged to the support of Home Rule; Lord Hartington might be a little restive at first, but he would be obliged to submit. This very memorandum, as will be shown in a subsequent chapter, became the basis of the Home Rule Bill as sub-

mitted by Mr Gladstone to Parliament; and therefore, though "uninspired," it evidently was not unauthentic. It is clear that Mr Gladstone never for a moment supposed that his Separation scheme would result in the disruption of his party, and would lead to his defeat, first in Parliament, and afterwards in the country. His plans were based upon the theory, sufficiently expounded in the memorandum of December 1885, that he was sure of the whole Liberal support *plus* 84 Irish votes, and that this would suffice to get rid of the Tories for the remainder of his life. He miscalculated all the conditions with which he had to deal; but he was true to his "rule." The 84 Irish votes would have made his position impregnable *if* the Liberal party had remained intact. In like manner, Mr Gladstone persuaded himself that the influence of the Parnellites in the English boroughs would decide the elections of 1886 in his favour. Mr Parnell boasted[1] that he and his friends could transfer "at least 50 seats now held by the Tories to the Liberal party. This will make 100 on a division, and

[1] New York Herald, June 20, 1886.

will convert the majority of 30 against the Bill into a majority of 70 for it." Mr T. P. O'Connor made a similar statement in the House of Commons. Mr Gladstone put implicit confidence in all this. It is no secret that he dissolved Parliament in July 1886 in the full and firm belief that he would be returned to power with a larger majority than ever. He went about the country, declaring that, in the course of his long life, he had never seen so general an outburst of enthusiasm in his favour. He boasted in extravagant strains that the people were with him; and it was quite evident, from his speeches and his letters, that this delusion hung around his mind for some time even after the elections, and it required the shock of repeated hostile divisions in the House of Commons to dispel it.

Although, therefore, it may be alleged that Mr Gladstone voluntarily associated himself with a losing cause when he became a convert to Mr Parnell's ideas, a little examination into dates and facts will show that in reality he was consistent with his general practice. He felt confident, in the first place, that Lord Harting-

ton and Mr Chamberlain would not dare to desert him; and his bitterness over his disappointment was frequently shown by his morbid irritability in the House of Commons during the autumn session of 1886. In the next place, he was persuaded that Scotland and Wales could certainly be won over to his support by the offer of Home Rule for themselves, and that the Irish party could control the result of the contest in England. The chances, therefore, according to his theories, were immensely in his favour. He did not foresee that his policy would be rejected by the patriotic working men of England, apart altogether from the "classes," or that it would cost him the support of all his ablest colleagues, and leave him in command of a wreck, aided only by a few followers, who are famous chiefly for their "reversible" opinions and their vagaries, or who owe obedience to the man who has made them what they are, knowing well that he alone can keep them from slipping back into their natural places.

Caution usually comes with old age; but Mr Gladstone is an exception to every rule. It was not till he had reached threescore and

ten years that he began to act with rashness. The previous part of his life had been marked by innumerable failures and blunders; but he always moved slowly and timidly, and seldom took any risks. Reform was "in the air" long before he decided to become its champion. He had made himself active in getting up a petition against the first Reform Bill;[1] but when he saw that Lord Palmerston's indifference to further reform excited some discontent in the country, he prepared to take the question from the hands of Lord John Russell. He was then beginning to be convinced that, as soon as Lord Palmerston was taken from the stage, Reform would prove the password to office. He judged, from all that he saw going on around him, that Conservatism, as a living force in politics, was no longer worthy of consideration. From exaggerating its strength, he passed into the opposite error of underrating it. But all his first advances towards Radicalism were apparently made with regret. He has generally fought

[1] A Chapter of Autobiography. By the Rev. Charles Wordsworth, Bishop of St Andrews.—Fortnightly Review, July 1883.

hard and stubbornly in favour of a cause before avowing himself its enemy. No one has thrown more warmth and zeal into the defence of landed property, of small boroughs, of Church Establishments, of the duty of the State to maintain freedom of contract inviolable.

No one has more vigorously condemned the abuse of power by a Minister, and no one has so often outraged his own doctrines. In 1871 he abolished purchase in the army by Royal Warrant, an exercise of the Royal prerogative which was denounced by many influential Liberals as an extremely dangerous innovation. Mr Fawcett declared that if a Tory Ministry had ventured upon such an act, it "would have been passionately denounced by Mr Gladstone, amid the applause of the whole Liberal party." But Mr Fawcett did not foresee that Radicalism was destined to render Mr Gladstone the most imperious of Ministers. This had no little to do with his fall in 1874; and after his return to power in 1886, his impatience of criticism or remonstrance sometimes alarmed his best friends. By his own address and skill the alliance with the Parnellites had been brought

about, and at first sight it seemed to render him the master of Parliament. In the spirit of a master he conducted all his operations. Few other men would have ventured to dissolve a Parliament scarcely eight months old because it declined to pass a measure of a totally unprecedented kind in English history. The members who refused to obey Mr Gladstone were to be deprived of their seats, or, at the very least, to be fined heavily for their insubordination. The "one-man" form of government was never attempted on so great a scale by a constitutional Minister as it was during the first session of 1886 by Mr Gladstone. Confident that he was invincible, he treated all opponents with undisguised contempt. Whenever his former colleagues desired to explain their positions, he burst in upon their statements with angry interruptions, or sought to overwhelm them with the jeering laughter and taunts which he so frequently introduces as a running commentary upon the speeches of all who presume to differ from him. If but a smile passes over the face of one of the Opposition while he is himself speaking, his

indignation knows no bounds. He condemns the indecent levity of modern times, and makes a few pathetic allusions to his old age and his fifty years of service. Yet he will avail himself of every form of the House, and even go beyond the forms, in order that he may disconcert an antagonist. If unlimited power had been within his reach in 1886, Mr Gladstone would soon have shown the world that there was nothing in Radical principles inconsistent with crushing and relentless despotism.

One by one, all the "fundamental principles" for which he had fought so hard down to his fiftieth year had been discarded. Nothing remained to be thrown over but the Established Church. From that last and crowning sacrifice Mr Gladstone has shrunk, but no man is so accomplished in the art of keeping a question open, and in stimulating expectation that he will one day take it in hand. By these tactics an *ad interim* support is secured from all who desire to see their particular question drawn into the field of "practical politics." It cannot be doubted that large bodies of Nonconformists have thus been led, at various periods, to an-

ticipate that the all-destroying axe of Mr Gladstone would eventually be laid at the root of the Established Church. He has given them no express promise, but he has said much to encourage their hopes. In a speech at Dalkeith at the outset of his celebrated "Mid-Lothian campaign" in 1879, he uttered words which were full of hidden meaning. The question of Scotch Disestablishment was not, he said, for him to determine. "It is not part of my duty to keep it backward. It is not part of my duty to endeavour to thrust it forward." His hearers might well be pardoned if they jumped to the conclusion that when sentence was pronounced, the executioner would not be found wanting. He had, on many previous occasions, indirectly prompted the sentence. The parochial clergy, he once wrote,[1] though partisans, were not often "on the side of labour." This was entirely meaningless if it was not intended to stir up bitterness in the minds of the labourers against the clergy. In fact, Mr Gladstone went on to say plainly that clerical indifference to labour had tended to "stimulate a feeling in favour of

[1] Nineteenth Century, November 1877.

the Disestablishment of the Church." This was putting the match very close to the fire. Another dexterous bid for the leadership of the Nonconformist party was made in the same article—written, be it observed, at the time when Mr Gladstone was out of office, and had determined to employ any and every means to overthrow Lord Beaconsfield. "Nonconformity," he wrote, "which still supplies to so great an extent the backbone of British Liberalism, is now largely intent on effecting Disestablishment." This has been the invariable tone adopted by Mr Gladstone when endeavouring to climb back to power. The machinery was set in motion once more soon after his defeat in 1886. "I cannot," he wrote to Dr Parker,[1] "forget the consistent and generous support which I have so long received from Nonconformists in all parts of the country." And then the old lure was brought into requisition, with all the old adroitness: "In my opinion, which receives from day to day more and more illustration, Church Establishments cannot and ought not to continue unless they prove themselves

[1] November 28, 1886.

useful to the maintenance of the higher life of the nation." Like the utterances of the ancient oracles, this saying might be interpreted in two ways. Either "more and more illustration" was being afforded that Church Establishments ought not to continue, or the reverse. Nonconformists would naturally read it in the way suggested by their wishes; devoted friends of the Church might hopefully give it the contrary application. Thus the support of Nonconformists might be secured without forfeiting the support of Churchmen. In the feat known to American politicians as "carrying water on both shoulders," no one, even in America, has ever equalled Mr Gladstone's performances.

Long ago the inevitable goal towards which Mr Gladstone was working was clearly perceived by a great man under whom he had served, and whom he used so ill—Lord Palmerston. The Conservatism of Lord Palmerston helped to make Mr Gladstone a Radical. The Radical party wanted a leader, and it was the only party at that moment unprovided for. Mr Gladstone prepared himself for the opportunity. "Gladstone," said Lord Palmerston to

Lord Shaftesbury,[1] "will soon have it all his own way; and whenever he gets my place, we shall have strange doings." Lord Shaftesbury added a weighty comment of his own: "Gladstone's language, and specially his acts, will show that the master-mind which curbed him is gone, and his resentment will appear in the political associations he will form, and in the violence and relish with which he will overthrow every thought and deed of his great leader." All the world is aware that these predictions were fulfilled to the letter. But there was much in the story of the connection between Lord Palmerston and Mr Gladstone which the world never knew, or has forgotten, and it constitutes so important a chapter of political history, and throws such a flood of light on Mr Gladstone's subsequent career, that it cannot be omitted from these pages.

As early as 1850, Mr Gladstone began to assume the attitude of the sentimentalist, in opposition to Lord Palmerston's somewhat aggressive patriotism. The celebrated *civis Ro-*

[1] Life and Work of the Seventh Earl of Shaftesbury. Diary, October 25, 1865.

manus sum speech,[1] of which Sir Robert Peel said "it made us all proud of the man who delivered it," roused nothing but scorn in Mr Gladstone's mind. He uttered a solemn protest against the comparison of an Englishman with a Roman citizen — "the member of a privileged class," who "belonged to a conquering race." Were we, he asked, "to be uplifted on a platform high above the standing-ground of all other nations"? He would have nothing to do with the *civis Romanus sum* theory. He wanted universal "brotherhood" instead. Universal brotherhood led him, not very long afterwards, into the Crimean war; but this disaster did not change his views concerning the depravity of Lord Palmerston's principles. If his theory had gone wrong, he held it to be a proof that Lord Palmerston was still more in the wrong. To visit his own faults upon the heads of others has always been one of Mr Gladstone's favourite consolations in adversity. It is right, he admits, that somebody should be punished, and he hastens to find a victim to suffer in his stead. On this principle of

[1] June 25, 1850.

vicarious sacrifice, he pursued Lord Palmerston for some years, in a spirit for which, considering all the circumstances, scarcely a parallel can be found in English political history.

In September 1856, Lord Palmerston, who was then endeavouring to extricate the country from the labyrinth of difficulties into which the Aberdeen Government had conducted it, was bitterly assailed by Mr Gladstone. He spoke of the Ministry as having been guilty of "levity" and "poltroonery," and declared that "for blunders, scandals, failures, and disgraces, official, political, constitutional, executive, and above all legislative, the session of 1855 perhaps exceeds all former precedent." Lord Palmerston had "resorted to a subterfuge;" he had assigned a pretended, not a real cause, for a certain action. "There is," he went on to complain, "no evolution of political mountebankery which it is not deemed advisable to excute rather than to tread in the old ways of the Constitution." Lord Palmerston had carried "dictation, assumption of power, reckless calculation upon parliamentary timidity or impotence," to a very high pitch indeed; he was ignorant of domestic

politics; he had no "earnestness of purpose;" he bullied the weak and crouched down before the strong. But Mr Gladstone was not yet satisfied with the picture of the Prime Minister, who had committed the offence of accepting his resignation with too great alacrity. He demanded why the country or Parliament did not interfere:—

"If the Minister deals with public business in a manner which destroys the mutual respect between Governments and Parliaments—if he acts in matters of high public concern without sincerity, that is, without earnestness of purpose—if they are mere cards and counters to be played with for the purpose of the hour—if he has neither extended knowledge of the public interests, nor is capable of feeling that deep and wearing solicitude about them which for other Ministers has constituted at once the chief burden of their life and their main title to the posthumous gratitude and admiration of their country,—why does not Parliament correct all this?"[1]

It will be seen that there is scarcely any grave fault of which a public man can be guilty which is not charged or insinuated in this assault upon Lord Palmerston. Want of sincerity, using matters of high public concern

[1] Quarterly Review, vol. xcix. p. 544.

as mere cards or counters, ignorance of public interests, indifference to the welfare of the country, all the offences which are most reprehensible in a public servant, are imputed to Lord Palmerston—just as they were afterwards imputed, by the same pen and mouth, to Lord Beaconsfield. The method adopted in both instances was precisely the same—even the language was substantially unchanged. There is seldom little that is new in Mr Gladstone's tactics. His custom is to begin by severely deprecating any imputation of unworthy motives, and then he proceeds to ascribe the worst of motives to his opponent. In 1876-77 he insinuated in a thousand forms the charge that Lord Beaconsfield was endeavouring to drag the country into a war with Russia, although at this very time Lord Beaconsfield and Lord Salisbury were straining every nerve to avoid such a war. Events more than justified their policy, and proved that Mr Gladstone had maligned them.[1] In the same way he incessantly endeavoured to excite distrust of Lord Palmerston by alleging that he was never happy unless he had

[1] See Part III., "Foreign Policy."

a war upon his hands, and by representing him as a sort of hired bravo, prowling about restlessly, day and night, in search of a quarrel with some weak and defenceless antagonist.

In January 1857, Mr Gladstone renewed his attacks. It was popularly supposed that Lord Palmerston had the virtue of courage. Mr Gladstone did not expressly deny this, but he contrived to say that it was not so. "Far be from us the rudeness of saying he has it not; but if he has, it is a gem still in the caves of ocean."[1] "The secret of Lord Palmerston's public life," he wrote three months later, "has always been the worship—the skilful and successful worship—of Power, in whatever seat it lay." As to foreign affairs, "the rule of his life has been to bluster and to intimidate." He complained bitterly of the increasing load of taxation, and warned the "country districts" that the burden would be "made heavier for them"—just as in later years, when the balance of power had shifted, and Lord Beaconsfield was in office, he roused the fears of the working

[1] Quarterly Review, vol. ci. p. 253 (1857).

classes by warning *them* to "look out" for higher taxes. After the elections of March 1857, when Lord Palmerston's Administration was returned to power stronger than ever, Mr Gladstone again accused him of resorting to "tricks and manœuvres beyond all precedent," and of having, by an artful use of ecclesiastical appointments, "attracted—perhaps we should say bribed—a certain number of votes." One feature alone in the Ministerial policy compelled Mr Gladstone's admiration—Lord Palmerston's hostility to a democratic measure of Reform. If he persisted in resisting such a measure, "we trust," wrote Mr Gladstone, "that, irrespective of general confidence, he will receive from the independent portions of the House a warm support, stinted neither by the recollection of what they have disapproved, nor by any unworthy jealousy of his perpetuating his power."[1] Above all things, the county franchise must not be tampered with. It was essential that it should continue to rest on the basis of "property and beneficial interest." Reform has been used by Mr Gladstone to

[1] Quarterly Review, vol. ci. p. 583.

serve every purpose in turn: sometimes he has been against it, when "the classes" had to be conciliated; sometimes he has been in its favour, when "the masses" were to be won over. But he has consistently maintained that Parliament was in a higher state of efficiency *before* the era of Reform; that the extension of the franchise has lowered the tone of public life, and injured the public service. On the other hand, it must be admitted that he has never employed these arguments at the moment when he was using Reform as a means of forcing his way to power.[1]

In February 1858 the Conspiracy to Murder Bill, introduced in consequence of Orsini's attempt on the life of Napoleon III., proved fatal to the Government. Lord Palmerston was defeated by 19 votes. Mr Gladstone believed that it was a final defeat. He therefore cast off all restraint in his onslaughts upon Palmerston. There was no redeeming point in the character of the fallen Minister. Mr Gladstone's exultation passed the bounds of moderation. "There is an end," he

[1] For the arguments in question, see Mr Gladstone's articles in the 'Nineteenth Century' and the 'Quarterly Review.'

wrote,[1] "of the day of that disastrous foreign policy which is associated with the name—with the famous but ill-omened name—of Palmerston. That sun has set, and has set, if we read the signs of the times aright, not to rise again." And here again he almost seems to have had a prophetic glimpse of a later stage of his own career; for he penned a remarkable passage, in which his position in 1886 is described so accurately, that, after substituting his own name for that of Lord Palmerston, not a word of it could be changed except for the worse:—

"We are not, indeed, of those who conceive that that nobleman is disqualified by age from resuming the first office of the State. There is no apparent reason, as far as Time and his scythe are concerned, why he might not again discharge the duties of Minister as well as, we fear not better than, before. . . . But he can hardly fail to see that a number of those who formerly supported him, amply sufficient in numbers, if their resolution hold, to give effect to the intention, have written this sentence upon the tablets of their heart: '*Come what may, Lord Palmerston shall not again be Minister.*' The quarrel between them is no lover's quarrel. The pro-

[1] Quarterly Review, vol. civ. p. 527 *et seq.*

scription is no personal proscription. It is the determination of a great and serious issue, too long neglected and misunderstood, but now at last deliberately handled, and to all appearance finally disposed of."

He went on to remark that Lord Palmerston "reminds us of the strange antithesis in some words of Rousseau, who says of a particular personage — 'Ce n'était assurément pas un homme sans mérite, quoique ce fût un grand vilain.'" It was, however, all over with him; "he cannot resume the station he has lost."

But Mr Gladstone has always been fatally misled when he has ventured into the regions of prophecy. In 1859, Lord Palmerston's sun, which had set for ever, rose again, and in forming a new Ministry, the "grand vilain" was adroit enough to offer Mr Gladstone his old post of Chancellor of the Exchequer. From that time Lord Palmerston had no more extravagant admirer and eulogist than Mr Gladstone. His mixture of "violence and poltroonery," his want of principle, his trickery and deception, the discredit he had brought upon England—all were forgotten and forgiven. Let those who have carefully considered the foregoing indict-

ment against Lord Palmerston, consider also the following eulogium, and then ask whether *both* could have been honestly put before the country by the same man? The quotation now given is from Mr Gladstone's speech on proposing a monument to Lord Palmerston, February 22, 1866:—

"It was his happy lot as Foreign Minister and Prime Minister of this country to be associated with that remarkable extension of constitutional freedom in Europe which has been among the happy characteristics of the present age. . . . As to Italy, I will venture to say that Lord Palmerston was one of the first and most prophetic of those who in England discerned the growing destinies of that country, and his name may claim a place by the side and on a level with that of her most distinguished patriots. . . . It was the lot of Lord Palmerston to be the Minister who brought to an honourable conclusion a war taxing severely the energies of his country. . . .

"Lord Palmerston had had the reward of his untiring zeal, his immense energy, and his long-continued labours, in an amount of public admiration and attachment such as upon the whole has surpassed that which has fallen to the lot of any other statesman of our time who has borne office under the Crown. It prevailed in the upper classes, the powerful and intelligent middle class, and descended into the ranks of humble and honest labour. In all these

his character and services were favourably and warmly appreciated. All who knew Lord Palmerston, knew his genial temper and the courage with which he entered into the debates in the House, his incomparable tact and ingenuity, his command of fence, his old English delight in a fair stand-up fight. He had the power to stir up angry passions, but he chose, like the sea-god in the Æneid, 'Quos ego—Sed motos præstat componere fluctus,' rather to pacify. . . .

"I believe it was the force of will, the sense of duty, and the determination not to give in, that enabled him to make himself a model for all of us who yet remain, to follow him with feeble and unequal steps in the performance of some of the duties which it fell to his lot to discharge.

"One other quality which Lord Palmerston possessed, upon which it is most delightful to dwell, is that he had a nature incapable of enduring anger or the sentiment of wrath. This freedom from wrathful sentiment was not the result of painful effort, but the spontaneous fruit of the mind—the noble gift of the original nature. It is delightful to remember it in connection with him who has been taken from us, with whose name we are no longer connected except in the endeavour to profit by his example wherever it can lead us in the path of duty and right, and to bestow on his memory that tribute of admiration and affection which it deserves at our hands."

It will be observed that the difference between these two portraits does not turn upon

slight or insignificant details—it goes to the very foundation of everything. The whole man is transformed. The shifty, truculent, unprincipled, ignorant politician becomes the lofty patriot, the courageous statesman, "the model for all of us," the noble example by which we are humbly "to endeavour to profit." If both portraits were exhibited to the world in sincerity and good faith, what is to be said of Mr Gladstone's powers of insight or judgment? Who, in private life, would trust the reputations of others to one who had proved himself capable of committing such deep, such deadly, injustice? Who would confide the direction of important affairs to a man who had shown himself, over a long course of years, persistently, hopelessly, and habitually in the wrong?

There was one other official who, while Mr Gladstone was out of office, had incurred his animosity, perhaps by reason of his fidelity to Lord Palmerston. This was Lord Clarendon. He was described by Mr Gladstone, in 1857,[1] as "an evil genius, fussy, fidgety, turbulent, bombastic, great with the small and small with the great."

[1] Quarterly Review, vol. ci. p. 256.

He was a "pliable organ," a "mere tool," a "supple and unresisting medium"—in short, an extremely bad and dangerous man. All this, no doubt, Mr Gladstone sincerely believed, and believing it, he made Lord Clarendon his own Foreign Secretary when he formed his Ministry in 1868. Was it because Lord Clarendon was a "pliable organ," such as Mr Gladstone sought for so diligently when his Home Rule scheme was to be forced upon the nation in 1886, or because he was the fittest man for the post? In the latter case, what excuse can there be for the calumnies of 1857?

We have seen how great were the changes produced by the development of Radicalism in Mr Gladstone's mind. It will be more important still to mark the results which followed the application of his new principles to foreign affairs and to Ireland.

III.

FOREIGN POLICY

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THERE is one aspect of Mr Gladstone's public life from which his future biographers will be able to exhibit him as the most consistent of modern statesmen. It is that which connects him as a Minister with foreign affairs. The history always runs in the same channels, and derives its inspiration from the same motives; and in the end it always reveals the same spectacle of national humiliation and misfortune, and of useless and hopeless bloodshed. Turn the page where we will, Mr Gladstone stands forth as the instigator or abettor of the most astounding blunders ever committed in the foreign policy of any great nation. The more closely the facts—the hard inexorable facts—are examined, the more thoroughly will

every word of this statement be found to be confirmed.

Some references have been made in the preceding chapter to the treatment received by Lord Palmerston at the hands of Mr Gladstone. But the story is not yet all told.

In 1855 it became evident that the country, then in the midst of the Crimean war, was determined to get rid of Lord Aberdeen, whose feeble and disastrous Ministry had brought universal discredit upon the nation. Mr Gladstone had filled the post of Chancellor of the Exchequer in that Administration, and upon him rests no small share of the responsibility for the Crimean war, as well as for the shameful condition in which our troops were sent out to meet the enemy. While the services were being starved, while army and navy were in a state of culpable inefficiency, while the country was rapidly "drifting" into war, Mr Gladstone went about boasting of our complete readiness to meet any emergency. "I really don't think," he said at a large meeting in Manchester,[1] "that England has often been better prepared

[1] October 12, 1853.—'Times' of 13th.

for war than she is at this moment." The soldiers who afterwards perished of cold and disease in the Crimea, bore ghastly and awful testimony to our fitness for war. But beyond all this, it is now generally admitted that if Lord Derby had not been defeated in 1852, and Lord Aberdeen and Mr Gladstone installed in office, the Crimean war would never have occurred. Authorities suspected of Tory proclivities would probably not be listened to on such a point, but we have the evidence of Mr Cobden, who told the House of Commons that he regretted the vote he gave against Lord Derby in 1852. "I have not the slightest doubt," he said, "from the information I possess, that that vote produced the Russian war." The latest and one of the most prejudiced of Whig historians is obliged to make substantially the same admission. Mr Spencer Walpole shows[1] that the Emperor Nicholas had "arrived at a virtual understanding" with Lord Aberdeen upon the Eastern question some years before 1852, and that on Aberdeen's accession to office, the Emperor naturally thought that the "Sick Man"

[1] History of England from the Conclusion of the Great War in 1815, vol. v. pp. 80-95.

was at last in his own hands. "Nicholas could not believe that war was possible while Aberdeen, the Minister with whom he had conversed in 1844, presided over the British Ministry." The Crimean war, according to Mr Bright,[1] cost this country £80,000,000 and 40,000 lives, and it must be ascribed entirely to the same vacillating spirit, the same want of foresight, the same facility of blundering into acts the consequences of which have not been weighed, as that which brought the costly and fruitless Egyptian wars upon us in 1882-84.

In January 1855, Mr Roebuck's motion for a Committee of Inquiry into the conduct of the war gave the *coup de grâce* to the Aberdeen-Gladstone Ministry. Lord Palmerston was called to power, and for a short time Mr Gladstone kept his office. But it was evident to all observers that the popularity of the war was rapidly on the decline, that a great financial deficit had to be provided for, and that the new Ministry had to face a long period of storms, perhaps of disasters. Mr Gladstone saw all this, and at the right moment he resigned.

[1] Speech at the Friends' Meeting House, St Martin's Lane, London, February 22, 1887.

He was thus enabled to escape from any further responsibility for the war; but the Ministry could not get out of it so easily. They were obliged to carry on the struggle in which Mr Gladstone and his colleagues had so heedlessly embarked. Mr Gladstone lost no time in using every effort to throw obstructions in the path of the Ministry. In the House of Commons he denounced the war—the war he had helped to make—as "immoral, inhuman, and unchristian." He declared that if the country continued it, "we should tempt the justice of Him in whose hands was the fate of armies, to launch upon us His wrath." The slightest sign of weakness on the part of England at that critical juncture was certain to give new strength and encouragement to her enemies, and to prolong the struggle. If the considerations urged by Mr Gladstone in May 1855 had been pressed in the Cabinet in December 1853 or in February 1854, the war might never have been undertaken. He waited until the country was committed to it, until she had sent into the field her best men, and almost staked her existence upon the issue,

and then he suddenly called upon her to strike her flag and surrender to the enemy. Although some years afterwards, and on a smaller scale, he was able to perform this feat in South Africa, it would have been dangerous, if not absolutely ruinous, for Lord Palmerston to have attempted it in the face of Europe in 1855. It is not surprising that Mr Gladstone's astounding change of front brought down upon him severe strictures in the session of that year. Mr J. G. Phillimore called the attention of the House of Commons to the fact that there was no longer any mystery concerning the shameful want of preparation for war which had been discernible in all our military operations. "I can comprehend," he said, "how great and magnificent preparations have shrunk into a miserable defence, how disaster and defeat have sprung from the bosom of victory, and how a fatal and malignant influence has long paralysed the influence of our fleets and armies." Mr Gladstone has never been able to save the nation from war; he has only succeeded in aggravating its misfortunes and sacrifices when war has come upon it by his blundering.

In July, Lord Palmerston thus dwelt upon Mr Gladstone's treachery towards his former colleagues, and upon the immense harm he was doing to his country:—

"But it must indeed be a grave reason which could induce a man who had been a party with her Majesty's Government to this line of policy, who had, after full and perhaps unexampled deliberation, sanctioned its commencement, who, having concurred after that full and mature deliberation, had also joined in calling upon the country for great sacrifices in order to continue it, and who had, up to a very recent period, assented to all the measures that had been proposed for its continuance,—I say it must indeed be a grave reason which could induce a man who had so acted, utterly to change his opinions, and to declare that the war to which he himself was a party was unnecessary, impolitic, and unjust; to exaggerate the resources of the enemy, and set before the country all the imaginary disasters with which his fancy could furnish his speech, and to magnify and exaggerate the force of the enemy and the difficulties of our own position."[1]

One cause of Mr Gladstone's invariable failure in foreign affairs, in more recent times, has been that he has generally found himself fettered in office by pledges or acts undertaken for the

[1] August 7, 1855. Hansard, 3d series, vol. 139, 1942-43.

purpose of destroying his predecessors. From 1876 to 1880, he continually held up Russia as an example to be followed by the world, because Lord Beaconsfield had found it absolutely necessary to check the renewed encroachments of that Power in the East. Mr Gladstone declared that the fears of Russian aggression in Asia were "no better than old women's fears."[1] England, if she had been in Russia's position, would "most likely have eaten up Turkey long ago." Yet he had not always regarded Russia with the same favourable eyes. In 1853, at Manchester,[2] in referring to Russia and Turkey, he used these significant words: "There is a necessity for regulating the distribution of power in Europe where there is a *certain absorption of power by one of the great potentates*, which would follow the fall of the Ottoman Empire, which would be *dangerous to the peace of the world; it is the duty of England, at whatever cost, to set itself against such a result.*" He thus laid it down as a binding and solemn obligation on the part of an English statesman to be perpetually on his guard against Russian

[1] Speech at West Calder, November 27, 1879.
[2] October 12th—'Times' report, October 13th.

aggression; and yet when, in 1877-78, Lord Beaconsfield was endeavouring to fulfil this very duty, and at a time when Russia was moving rapidly towards Constantinople, Mr Gladstone applied himself strenuously to the work of encouraging Russia and paralysing the British Government. Every expedient was adopted for the purpose of exasperating the public mind against Lord Beaconsfield and his colleagues. In the very midst of the crisis, at the moment when Russia was actually about to spring upon Turkey, Mr Gladstone insinuated that the Ministry was secretly plotting to involve the nation in a huge war. He even went so far as to throw out dark hints that English liberties were in danger. "That opens to you," he said,[1] "another question which seems to me extremely grave. Something was said to-day about the present position of English liberty. I will go so far as to say that it is an unexampled position, but whether it is in danger or not at this moment, I will not say; *but I will say that it requires great watchfulness.* This proceeding with the Indian troops is itself a proof that if you care for your liberties

[1] Speech at Hawarden, May 8, 1878.

you must be watchful over them." This solemn warning doubtless disturbed thousands of anxious breasts with visions of hordes of bloodthirsty Hindoos and Mussulmans let loose upon the helpless population of England, while Lord Beaconsfield seized the propitious moment to proclaim himself Dictator. In the 'Nineteenth Century' for June 1878, Mr Gladstone again sounded the alarm. The Ministry, he declared, had committed a "breach of something even higher" than the "Bill of Rights, or of the Mutiny Act, or of both." It had defied the law, and perpetrated an "assault upon the Constitution." He endeavoured with might and main to inflame native feeling in India against England. "In distant, and to her children ungenial climes," he wrote, "in lands of usage, tongue, religion, wholly alien, the flower of her youth are to bleed and die for us, and she will have no part but to suffer and obey."[1] He went on, in excited strains, to denounce this as "injustice, gross and monstrous injustice," and he warned the Indians that they were only to be treated as "the pariah forces" of our wars

[1] Nineteenth Century, June 1878, p. 1165.

—inferior soldiers, "to whom every high reward of valour is denied, every avenue of hope for eminence and fame jealously and irremediably closed."

Whether it was patriotic on the part of a public man of Mr Gladstone's influence and position thus to strive to stir up disaffection among our own troops, and even to run the risk of causing a revolt to break out in India, and at the same time to give open "aid and comfort" to our enemies, are questions which every one may decide for himself. The *fact* which has to be recorded against Mr Gladstone's diatribes is that at the very first foreign crisis into which he stumbled, he called over the Indian troops, used them in his wretched campaigns in Egypt, made them "suffer and obey," and sent them back to India without even permitting them to share in that wonderful military street-procession which was the finest practical commentary ever seen on Mr Gladstone's theories of universal love and brotherhood. The first summons to our Indian troops was the greatest stroke of statesmanship since the days of Pitt. Mr Gladstone covered

Lord Beaconsfield with obloquy for having conceived it, and then pirated the invention.

He dealt with the whole policy of his predecessor on a similar principle. The acquisition of Cyprus was denounced as a fraud, an outrage, a mere "worthless bribe," the island itself being "worse than worthless." He was afterwards extremely glad to make use of it as a base of military operations in a new war of his own creating. The purchase of the Suez Canal shares, because Lord Beaconsfield carried it out, was condemned as "foolish"—a "manœuvre," "a silly transaction," "devised for hoodwinking the people of this country."[1] Everybody now knows how immensely these shares have risen in value, and what a profitable investment they have proved for this country, regarded merely as a pecuniary transaction. Austria was denounced as a wicked and baneful Power, simply because Lord Beaconsfield had thought it wise—and no one now doubts that he was right—to place Great Britain in friendly relations with that Power, as well as

[1] Speech at Glasgow, December 5, 1879; and 'Gleanings,' vol. i. p. 218, article "Kin Beyond Sea."

with the German Empire. "Austria," cried Mr Gladstone, "has been the steady unflinching foe of freedom in every country in Europe," with an infinite deal more to the same effect. This happened in March 1880. In May, having accomplished all that he had in view, and broken down the government of Lord Beaconsfield, he apologised humbly, almost abjectly, to the Austrian Minister for the language he had used. He expressed his "serious concern" at the expressions he had uttered, and virtually gave a promise not to offend again. In his Mid-Lothian speech [1] he had denounced Austria and all her works in the most sweeping manner. "There is not an instance, there is not a spot upon the whole map, where you can lay your finger and say, 'There Austria did good.'" In his letter to Count Károlyi he meekly denied that he had any "hostile disposition" towards Austria, and pleaded that he had "at all times particularly and heartily wished well to Austria in the performance of the arduous task of consolidating the empire." "I feel a cordial respect for the efforts of the Emperor"—"the

[1] March 17, 1880.

unflinching foe of freedom." No one tried to reconcile these two views of Austria; but everywhere in Europe the apology was stigmatised as the most humiliating document ever signed by a great English Minister. But it was something more than that. It was an acknowledgment that Mr Gladstone had led astray his own countrymen throughout the agitation of 1879-80—that, as a great German newspaper said, "the movement upon which he was borne to power was a deception." He had totally misrepresented the policy of Lord Beaconsfield, and maligned foreign Powers, in order that he might sweep his opponent from office, and step into his place.

Apart from pure sentimentalism and dreams, Mr Gladstone has never been guided in his treatment of foreign affairs by any other idea than that of attacking the policy and reversing the acts of his political opponents. Lord Beaconsfield had caused Candahar to be brought within the empire, and everybody who knew the importance to British India of that possession, approved of the sagacity and foresight which suggested the annexation. Lord Napier's testi-

mony on the subject ought never to be forgotten. "If," he said, "the annexation is carried out, the district of Candahar will become prosperous and valuable. The inherent vitality of the trade between India and Central Asia has enabled it to struggle on in spite of the perils and exactions to which it has been subject. A safe road to Candahar will give it a clear start, and instead of purchasing Russian articles at Peshawur, we shall deliver British manufactures to Central Asia." That this trade would have been of immense value to England, at the opening of an era of competition in manufacturing industries such as she had never before known, cannot be doubted. But Mr Gladstone decreed that whatever Lord Beaconsfield had done must be undone. Candahar was given up, the Quetta railway was sacrificed, and the commercial advantages which we might have enjoyed were transferred to Russian merchants, while Russia, who never gives up anything, and never recedes a single step, was encouraged to pursue her advances towards Afghanistan. Once more the "Palmerstonian legend" had been trampled upon, and

the great cause of "universal brotherhood" had triumphed.

But Mr Gladstone had by no means finished his work. In the course of the speeches which he had delivered in 1879-80, he denounced the measures by which the Transvaal became British territory, and used every argument which could induce the Boers to rise against us. These speeches were circulated far and wide throughout the colony, and, as a matter of course, the rising took place in due time. Mr Gladstone had not only assailed the Ministry, but he had gone out of his way to attack the Governor of Cape Colony, Sir Bartle Frere, knowing well that this official was at too great a distance to reply. Sir Bartle Frere was accused of being one of the chief directors of a policy which was "depraving the morality and ruining the finances of England." No greater, no more cruel injustice, was ever done to any man. Sir Bartle Frere was held up to the execration of his countrymen, recalled under a cloud, and practically had his career cut off and ruined. In July 1881, he wrote a letter in which, while making but brief allusion to his own wrongs,

he pointed out the inevitable consequences of Mr Gladstone's course :—

"To the personal results to myself I have no intention to refer ; but I believe that the statements and opinions to which these speeches gave currency and authority caused infinite mischief in South Africa. They have retarded the prosperity and progress of European colonies in that region ; they have laid the foundation of wars, and raised very serious obstacles to the religious, moral, and political advancement of the native races. On my return to England, I find the old calumnies and misrepresentations of fact constantly recalled and used by your political followers, to the prejudice of the interests, and the ruin of the prosperity of a region which might otherwise become a southern home of men of European races, discharging a great duty in civilising and raising in the scale of humanity the millions of natives, &c. Such misrepresentations—which I would gladly believe were the want of knowledge of actual facts, and not a wilful distortion of them—affect necessarily not only the past history but the future of those important colonies."

It had not been customary in English public life for distinguished statesmen to blast the fame of the Queen's servants engaged in their duties in distant lands ; but Mr Gladstone has created many new precedents of all kinds in his time, and the fate of Sir Bartle Frere cost him

as little compunction or regret as the sacrifice of any other victim who has stood in his way.

In the meantime, he had succeeded in making himself Prime Minister. He was at first indisposed to be bound by his speeches of 1879. If he could have got rid of the effects of them by an apology, doubtless it would have been forthcoming. But the Boers had taken him at his word, and fully believed that he would not, and could not, long stand out against them. They were right. It would be impossible to recount in these few pages the mournful history of the South African war. A brief summary of its results is all that can be attempted, and that summary may be taken from the speech of a man who is now one of Mr Gladstone's most active allies—Mr John Dillon.[1] "I heard him (Mr Gladstone) say, in the House of Commons, that he would enter into no terms with the Dutch until the authority of the Queen was re-established in South Africa. He was beaten once, and he did not stop the war; he was beaten a second time, and he did not stop the war; but he was beaten a third time at Majuba

[1] October 11, 1881.

Hill, and then he gave in." Is it any wonder that Mr Dillon and his friends afterwards played upon Mr Gladstone's fears and weakness as the Boers had done, and with even more memorable consequences?

Mr Forster showed in the House of Commons[1] that Mr Gladstone's course in the Transvaal had involved the shameful desertion of allies who had been guilty of no other crime than that of fidelity to the British flag. "Is the reward of our loyalty," a Cape Colonist asked us,[2] "to be the loss of our lives in battle to many of us, and to the rest the loss of home, and wife, and child, and property? Are you so weak and so cowardly that to fight against you is certain gain, and to be your friends is certain destruction?" These were bitter questions to listen to, and upon many an English ear they must have grated harshly; but they made no impression upon Mr Gladstone. The loyal colonists and our native allies were to be betrayed. Mr Forster protested against this as a "dangerous and costly act;" one which might some day in-

[1] March 16, 1883.

[2] In a letter to the 'Standard,' November 7, 1881.

volve our withdrawal from the Cape altogether. "It is a very serious matter," he added, "for such a country as England to say that it is too weak to protect its allies." His warnings fell upon deaf ears at that time, but there were some who remembered them afterwards, when a desertion of our allies on a still greater and more shameful scale was witnessed in Egypt, and the slaughtered garrisons of Sinkat, Tokar, Kassala, and Khartoum had to be reckoned among the innumerable victims of Mr Gladstone's incapacity and blindness.

To recount the history of the Egyptian war would require far more space than the whole of this volume contains, but its causes and results admit of being briefly told. To begin with, the war was the direct consequence of Mr Gladstone's previous words and acts, and of the rashness shown by his second Administration in agreeing to the famous "Dual Note" of January 1882. "It made a catastrophe inevitable," was the damaging admission at the time of one of Mr Gladstone's most docile supporters,[1] afterwards a "flexible instrument"

[1] Mr John Morley in the 'Fortnightly Review,' July 1882.

in the Separation policy. "The first great false move," the same authority affirmed, "was unquestionably the joint note presented in January. . . . To that unfortunate step we owe no small part of our present difficulties. . . . It undid in a moment the work of years, and at the same time that it made an enemy of Arabi, it arrayed the Sultan, the Notables, and all the other powers on his side. An unluckier move was never made."[1] The evidence on this point is overwhelming, but the examples of it here cited must suffice, and those examples have been chosen from a writer whose attachment to the Parnellite-Gladstone Alliance is not more remarkable than his constancy to the principle that when you are threatened it is your first duty to bow down meekly in the dust, and yield whatever may be demanded.

The revolt of the Egyptian colonels broke out, and then ensued the bombardment of the port of Alexandria, and the subsequent destruction of a great part of the city. The entire catastrophe was due to Mr Gladstone's infatuated policy. Arabi would never have rebelled

[1] Pall Mall Gazette, June 27, 1882.

against the Khedive, or would have been instantly suppressed, if the Sultan had but raised a finger against him. But Mr Gladstone had put it out of his power to call upon the Sultan. He had formed the idea that Lord Beaconsfield had undertaken to go to war for the Sultan, and therefore he went forth from Hawarden preaching a new crusade against the Porte. Turkey was the "great anti-human specimen of humanity;" it "plundered, violated, and murdered" its subjects; it exhausted upon them "all the resources of a wickedness more fiendish than human;" it indulged in "fell Satanic orgies;" wherever the Turks went, a "broad line of blood marked the track behind them." Whether these charges were true or false, they effectually shut out Mr Gladstone, when he was reinstated in office, from calling upon the Sultan to restore order in Egypt. He had not only accused Turkey of all the crimes under heaven, but he had insinuated, in no very indirect manner, that Lord Beaconsfield had rendered himself responsible for these crimes.[1] The attack accomplished its main

[1] See "Bulgarian Horrors," *passim*, 1876.

design; it helped to place Mr Gladstone in power; but it also saddled him with the burden and disgrace of a long and terrible series of cruelties, outrages, and murders in Egypt and the Soudan, which will for ever mark his second Administration with a "broad line of blood."

England had lost all influence at Constantinople. The Sultan looked on with cynical satisfaction at the appalling difficulties with which Mr Gladstone was surrounding himself in Egypt. The "greatest of orators" had once more staggered into a war which he was impotent to conduct. The British fleet was sent to Alexandria, but Arabi, far from being overawed, made ready for resistance. The forts were bombarded, and as no precautions had been taken on shore to defend the property of peaceable inhabitants, the city was sacked and burnt. So slight was the impression which these events made upon Mr Gladstone, or so defective is his memory, that he once attacked Sir Stafford Northcote for having asserted that the burning of Alexandria was occasioned by the bombardment. He maintained that the

"conflagration took place before the bombardment." Some one by his side prevailed upon him to have a little regard for facts, and at a later period of the evening he withdrew his statement, but almost to the last he denied that we were at war. We were only engaged in carrying out "military operations." War, so shocking to his mind when out of office, seemed quite an everyday affair when he was in power. On one occasion he protested warmly against the waste of time in the House of Commons over Egyptian affairs. "Why in the world is this pressure exercised?" he exclaimed. "Why two or three times a-week have we these debates? One might suppose that Egypt and the Soudan were in England!"[1] This was not quite the same tone as that which ran through his pamphlets on "Bulgarian Horrors" and "Lessons in Massacre." Then his deepest feelings were stirred by the stories, more or less exaggerated or apocryphal, of the cruelties committed upon unoffending men and women. The sensitive nature hardened rapidly in Downing Street. The cry of oppressed man-

[1] April 3, 1884—'Times' report, April 4.

kind excited nothing but impatience. Why so much din and uproar over a few thousands of men, women, and children, whose blood reddened the Egyptian sands? "Anybody would think that Egypt and the Soudan were in England."

In November 1883, Hicks Pasha and his forlorn army were cut to pieces by the Mahdi; and as the Egyptian Government had been practically superseded by Mr Gladstone, he could not avoid taking some steps to check the progress of insurrection. He persuaded General Gordon to go to the Soudan as the representative of the British Government, with instructions to withdraw the Egyptian garrisons, and as many of the inhabitants as might wish to be taken away. It probably never occurred to General Gordon that he would be expected to carry out this work single-handed, that his advice would be disregarded, and that his warnings would be treated with stony indifference. The sense of fear or danger was unknown to him; but had he understood the character of the man with whom he had to deal, he might reasonably have refused a mission which could

only lead to continued and useless sacrifices of life. But General Gordon probably knew little more of Mr Gladstone than everybody knows—that he is a "great orator." He supposed him also to be a man who would be faithful to those whom he had pressed into his service. He lived long enough to form a juster estimate of Mr Gladstone.

While Gordon was on his way to the Soudan the garrisons of Sinkat and Tokar were massacred, after many fruitless appeals to the British Government for help. When relief was sent to Sinkat, it was too late—the words written in letters of fire all across the history of Mr Gladstone's intervention in Egypt. General Gordon soon saw that he would require aid, but everything that he asked for was either refused or delayed. "We do not propose," telegraphed Lord Granville on the 23d of April 1884, "to supply him with Turkish or other force for the purpose of undertaking military expeditions, such being beyond the scope of the commission he holds, and at variance with the pacific policy which was the purpose of his mission to the Soudan; that if with this knowledge he con-

tinues at Khartoum, he should state to us the cause and intention with which he so continues." The word-fencing and quibbling had begun. Could there have been a greater mockery than to ask General Gordon why he continued at Khartoum? He was sent to withdraw the garrisons, and after his arrival at Khartoum he had rendered himself more than ever responsible for the safety of the people. "It would be the climax of meanness," he telegraphed on the 8th of April, "after I had borrowed money from the people here, and called on them to sell their grain at a low price, &c., to go and abandon them without using every effort to relieve them, whether those efforts are diplomatically correct or not; and I feel sure, whatever you may feel diplomatically, I have your support—and that of every man professing himself a gentleman—in private." The golden moments when Khartoum might have been relieved were running out. In March—perhaps in April—Berber could have been taken, and the road to Khartoum kept open; but Mr Gladstone declared in the House of Commons that the fall of Berber would not "seriously affect the safety

of Khartoum."[1] All the world knew better, and General Graham, General Stewart, and General Gordon had earnestly begged the Government to allow the expedition which had defeated Osman Digna to hold Berber. They were beating the air. Mr Gladstone had made up his mind. Gordon began to see into what sort of hands he had fallen, and in the last despatch which he was enabled to send from Khartoum before the telegraph was destroyed, he said he would suppress the rebellion if he could; if he could not, he added, "I leave you the indelible disgrace of abandoning the garrisons of Senaar, Kassala, Berber, and Dongola." When the native tribes saw that the Government had deserted Gordon, there was little chance of escape left for any of the party. The people of England could not bring themselves to share Mr Gladstone's apathy concerning the fate of the great soldier he had sent out only to be killed. A relief expedition was demanded, and nobly it tried to perform its duty; but it was sent too late. Gordon performed prodigies of valour throughout the long and weary summer

[1] House of Commons, April 24, 1884.

and autumn, and far into the winter he was still wrestling with the impossible. At last treachery within the walls of Khartoum completed the ruin which ignorance, folly, and treachery in London had begun. General Gordon was slain; and a few nights after the news of his death arrived in England, and while a shock was still running through the length and breadth of the land, Mr Gladstone was the "observed of all observers" at the play, where a roaring farce kept him in continual laughter.

Events had turned out unfortunately; let the fault rest with the Tories, not with Mr Gladstone. The battles of Tel-el-Kebir, Tamasi, Teb, Abu Klea, Gubat, Kerbekan, and many others, were all in vain; but Mr Gladstone's mind was quite easy. He is said to have expressed his unbounded surprise at the "fuss" which was made over the fate of General Gordon. In the House of Commons he did not scruple to assert that Gordon might have escaped from Khartoum if he had been so minded. Gordon forbore, said Mr Gladstone—"determinedly forbore"—"to make use of the means of personal safety, which, so far

as I know, were largely at all times, or at all events long, within his power."[1] There was too much generous and manly feeling in the House of Commons to permit this cruel stab at the reputation of a dead man to be made without protest, and in deference to the murmurs and cries of dissent which arose, Mr Gladstone modified his words, but he clung to the idea that Gordon had thrown away his life. On the 23d of February, he ventured to make another allusion to it. "We believed," he said, "that it was in the power of General Gordon to *remove himself*, and those immediately associated with him, from Khartoum, by going to the south." As for the base desertion of duty which would have been involved in Gordon's flight, had that flight been practicable, Mr Gladstone had not a word to say. He has his own standard of principles and morals, and the outer world has no part or lot in it.

Every power or ally which placed dependence upon England while Mr Gladstone has held office, has, sooner or later, suffered heavily for

[1] Speech in the House of Commons, February 20, 1885.

it. Denmark dreamt that it could trust a Ministry of which the great friend and advocate of "autonomy" and freedom was a powerful member, but it had reason to rue its mistake. The Treaty of Berlin provided us with an honourable means of acting with Turkey, and laid the basis of a new Austro-German alliance. The great Powers, which supposed that a compact with England was binding, were soon undeceived. Mr Gladstone accumulated insults upon Turkey, Austria, and Germany, while he exhorted us to "emulate the good deeds" of Russia. But Russia herself did not escape from the general penalty exacted from all who put their trust in Mr Gladstone. Before his expulsion from office in 1885, he had once more gone within a hair's-breadth of dragging his country into war with the Power he had professed to befriend. He was compelled to come before Parliament asking for a vote of credit of £11,000,000, partly to enable him to carry out preparations for a new struggle with Russia. There are the strongest reasons for concluding that the defeat of the Gladstone Ministry, and the accession of Lord Salisbury

to power, alone averted that struggle. The circumstances which preceded the Crimean war had all been repeated. Russia had been brought to believe that she could pursue her designs upon Turkey and her advances in Asia without molestation from England. Mr Gladstone had extolled her good deeds from every platform. The Emperor of Russia was misled, as his grandfather Nicholas had been before him. He thought that all England was in the hollow of Mr Gladstone's hands. A more and more aggressive and defiant attitude was therefore taken up by Russia, English feeling was aroused, Mr Gladstone saw at the eleventh hour that he was about to plunge Europe into strife, and he was seized with panic. The army and navy reserves were called out in hot haste; millions were spent in preparing to meet a danger which need not have been incurred. When the Russians were actually advancing upon Constantinople, Lord Beaconsfield obtained a vote of £6,000,000 to strengthen the army and navy. Mr Gladstone exhausted all his copious resources of invective in denouncing this act. In April 1885, the Nemesis which seemed to

dog his steps forced him to go to the House of Commons and ask for £500,000 more than Lord Beaconsfield had obtained, in order that he might cry "hands off" to the very Power which he had instigated to come on. A further sum of £4,500,000 was demanded for the "military operations" in the Soudan, and the whole £11,000,000—representing an income-tax of 6d. in the pound—was as utterly thrown away as if it had been sunk in the depths of the Atlantic. £20,000,000 would not represent the cost to the country of the Gladstone Government from 1880 to 1885, and an additional burden of at least £9,000,000 was thrown upon Egypt. Mr Gladstone's eloquence and popularity have been dearly paid for by other nations besides his own. Between 1880 and 1885, he or his representatives stirred up discontent in almost all parts of our possessions, besides setting Europe against us. India was thrown into a dangerous state of agitation by Lord Ripon; the South African and Australian colonists were bitterly estranged, in accordance with the policy too often pursued by the Radical party

of disregarding alike the wishes and the interests of our fellow-countrymen who have carried our commerce and our name into distant parts of the earth. Finally, after the wild recklessness with which blood and treasure were lavished in Egypt, the condition of that country was far worse at the end of Mr Gladstone's five years of power than at the beginning. He lacked the requisite nerve and judgment to decide upon a definite policy to be pursued in Egypt, and the consequence was, that instead of settling the Eastern question, he handed it over in a more entangled and more critical state than ever to his successors.

It must be confessed that Mr Gladstone's most enthusiastic advocates usually keep silence in reference to his foreign policy. But there are many who imperfectly remember the details of that policy, or who have grown up in the belief that Mr Gladstone's greatness as an orator made him great in every office which he filled, and in every work to which he put his hand. Let them try to find a "a spot upon the whole map" on which "they can lay their fingers" and say, "There Mr Gladstone did good." He

sympathised with Italy; but he made no sacrifice for Italy, and was called upon to make none. He also sympathised with the Bulgarians; and yet when a "midnight conspiracy" was set in action by Russia to stifle Bulgarian liberties, Mr Gladstone preserved a dogged silence, until appeal after appeal from the Bulgarian deputies compelled him to speak, and then he had only a few cold and ambiguous words to send them. Bulgaria in 1886 was useless as a weapon of offence against political opponents. The Bulgarians, who kept sending him plaintive petitions for encouragement, did not understand the situation. They did not see that whereas in 1879-80 they could be used as a means of turning Lord Beaconsfield out of office, in 1886 they were nothing better than an extinct force in English politics. Mr Gladstone's sympathies are never rashly squandered.

But then, it is said, Mr Gladstone referred the Alabama claims to arbitration, and thus avoided a possible war with the United States. Common justice, however, should couple with this statement two others of equal importance: first, that arbitration was originally decided

upon by the Government of Lord Derby and Mr Disraeli in 1868; and second, that the method of arbitration afterwards agreed to by Mr Gladstone was most unfair and injurious to England. That the "indirect claims" of the United States should have been allowed to enter into the discussion at all, and that no counter-claims should have been presented for the losses inflicted upon the Canadians by the Fenian invasions, — these were errors tantamount, as the Americans boasted at the time, to the "wholesale capitulation" of England. The result of the German Emperor's arbitration, and of the Geneva Conference, was that England had to surrender the island of San Juan,[1] and to pay £3,200,000 as indemnity for the Alabama claims. The actual claims of shipowners and others who had sustained losses from the depredations of the cruisers, did not amount to half that sum; and for years after the award, the United States Government were utterly at a loss to know what to do with the money. They adopted every reasonable expe-

[1] See, for a clear statement of the case, Earl Russell's 'Recollections and Suggestions,' chap. xii.

dient to get rid of it. All varieties of claimants had dipped into "John Bull's ransom"; and at last advertisements were issued calling upon "merchants, shippers, consignees, captains, seamen, *and others*," to come forward and relieve the American Treasury of the English gold. If the Cabinet in which Mr Gladstone was so powerful had done its duty in the first instance by stopping the Alabama, or if Mr Gladstone had subsequently done his duty in declining any arbitration into which "indirect claims" entered in any shape, either the difficulty with the United States would not have arisen, or it would have been arranged on fair and honourable terms. But during the American war, Mr Gladstone believed in the success of the South. He has denied that he "sympathised" with it; he only made speeches encouraging it. At Newcastle, on the 7th October 1862, he made the following important declaration: "There is no doubt that Jefferson Davis, and other leaders of the South, have made an army; that they are making, it appears, a navy; and that they have made what is more than either, *they have made a nation.* We may anticipate with

certainty the success of the Southern States so far as regards their separation from the North. I cannot but believe that that event is as certain as any event yet future and contingent can be." Apart from the habitual want of foresight disclosed in this rash prediction, it is not difficult to imagine, even at this distance of time, the effect which such a statement, coming from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, must have had upon the Southern leaders, who were then daily expecting their formal recognition as belligerents by the British Government. Mr Gladstone's words were accepted as a pledge that this aid would shortly be forthcoming; and he thus assisted, in a very powerful manner, to encourage and prolong the war. The Geneva Conference ought to have fixed what was the precise portion of the £3,200,000 which Mr Gladstone would have been called upon to pay if the fine had been exacted from the chief offenders.

Among the latest judgments submitted by Earl Russell to the consideration of his countrymen, there will be found the following:—

"In 1868 I had no reason to suppose, when I surrendered the leadership of the party, that he [Mr Gladstone]

was less attached than I was to the national honour, less proud than I was to the achievements of our nation by sea or land, that he disliked the extension of our colonies, and that the measures he promoted intended to reduce the great and glorious empire of which he was put in charge, to a manufactory of cotton and cloth, and a market for cheap goods ; that the army and navy would be reduced by paltry savings to a standard of weakness and inefficiency. . . . By his foreign policy he has tarnished the national honour, injured the national interests, and lowered the national character." [1]

Another old member of the Liberal party, Lord Fortescue, summed up the long and ignominious story of Mr Gladstone's foreign policy in a few words :[2]—

"I thought, with Earl Russell, that Mr Gladstone during his first Premiership had 'tarnished the nation's honour, lowered the national character, and injured the national interests.' But I think he has done so much more since. He has caused or waged wars with profuse bloodshed in various regions of the earth, but not with honour to his Government. He has carried on important negotiations of various kinds, but not with credit or advantage to England. . . . In four years he has brought England from her proud position, when Lord Beacons-

[1] Recollections and Suggestions.

[2] Letter to the 'Times,' September 25, 1884.

field brought back peace with honour from Berlin, far down towards that secondary position among nations, which he has frankly told us he contemplates with cheerful acquiescence her speedily occupying. What wonder that he and his colleagues, in order to divert public attention from this sad spectacle, and sadder future prospects, should have first brought in a large separate Franchise Bill; and then got up an agitation against the House of Lords, because that House declines, unless at the desire of the country constitutionally pronounced, to bring into immediate operation one half only, though itself a nearly unobjectionable half, of a complete measure of parliamentary reform, during the intentional delay or suppression of the other half!"

But the record of all these follies and disasters, crushing as it would be to the reputation of any Minister, is thrown far into the shade by the tragic story of Mr Gladstone's active intervention in Irish affairs. That part of his public life, at least, is likely, for all time to come, to remain unapproached and unapproachable by any Englishman of equal eminence.

IV.

IRISH POLICY

1868-1885.

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Mr Gladstone first held office in 1835.[1] From that time down to the year 1868, he had shown little interest in Irish affairs. Few and scanty are the references to Ireland to be found in any of his speeches. Never was there a word uttered to indicate that he was dissatisfied with the Act of Union or with its effects. He was far indeed from assailing the policy or measures of Pitt. In his article on the "Declining Efficiency of Parliament" (Quarterly Review, September 1856) he incidentally deplored the interruption of Pitt's "attempts at legislative progress, with the *splendid* but

[1] Not reckoning the minor appointment of Lord of the Treasury in 1834.

isolated exceptions of the *Union with Ireland*, and the abolition of the Slave Trade." Thus, before the necessity of purchasing the Irish alliance was brought home to him, he regarded the Union as reflecting splendour on the Minister who carried it out. When the Parnellite vote had to be obtained, on Mr Parnell's own terms, Mr Gladstone's views and language underwent a great alteration. "I advise you," he wrote to one of his *protégés*, just after the elections of 1886,[1] "to take resolutely to the study of Irish history. I have done in that way the little that I could, and I am amazed at the deadness of vulgar opinion to *the blackguardism* and baseness—no words are strong enough—which befoul the whole history of the Union." The transition from splendour to "blackguardism," in an expression of opinion relating to one and the same measure, is a change of no little moment, and it is the duty of every dispassionate inquirer to ascertain whether any peculiarity in Mr Gladstone's position in 1886 throws light upon this change.

[1] Letter, undated, to Mr G. Leveson-Gower, Liberal Whip, defeated in the elections.

It will be necessary to bear clearly in mind that the period from 1835 to 1868 was barren in Mr Gladstone's life, so far as Ireland was concerned. This is the undoubted fact; yet facts, as we have seen, have to give way, like lesser things, at Mr Gladstone's summons. It appears, from a statement which Mrs Gladstone caused to be published,[1] that during these three-and-thirty years, Mr Gladstone was "absorbed" in the Irish question.

"From the very outset of his political career, Mr Gladstone's most ardent wish, his strongest ambition, has been to redress the grievances of Ireland and undertake the settlement of the Irish difficulty upon drastic lines. I remember very well the day he received his first Cabinet appointment under Sir Robert Peel. It was the same day that my niece, Lady Frederick Cavendish, was born. Coming home, he threw himself into a chair, looking quite depressed. 'What did you get?' I asked. 'The Board of Trade,' he said. I understood his disappointment. He had hoped to get the Irish Chief Secretaryship, though it was looked on then as a far less important post."

That he should have concealed his burning

[1] In October 1886—interview with Mr Gill, a Nationalist, and one of the staff of 'United Ireland.' Mr Gladstone himself afterwards confirmed the statement.

affection for Ireland so completely that no one outside his home circle even suspected it, is at least a proof of his wonderful self-control. Mr Disraeli once reminded him, amid the general cheers of the House of Commons,[1] that he had held power for "a quarter of a century, and that he had never done anything for Ireland but make speeches in favour of the Irish Church." But, as Mr Gladstone remarks in a recent pamphlet, "all men do not perceive, all men do not appreciate ripeness with the same degree of readiness or aptitude; and the slow must ever suffer inconvenience in the race of life."[2] The faculty of distinguishing "ripeness," so as not to be left behind in the "race of life," was among the greatest of the gifts which nature originally conferred upon him. When was a cause likely to win? When did power turn upon its advocacy? In a word, when had "ripeness" set in? Mr Gladstone's keenness of perception in such matters as these can never be exaggerated.

In 1866 Mr Gladstone was Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Leader of the House of

[1] March 16, 1868. [2] The Irish Question (1886), p. 22.

Commons, in an Administration which resolutely declined to consider the question of Irish Disestablishment. He refused to hold out the least hope or encouragement to those who represented the existence of the Irish Church as an injustice which ought to be redressed. The question, he declared in 1865, was "remote, and apparently out of all bearing upon the practical politics of the day." As for himself, he "scarcely expected ever to be called on to share in such a measure."[1] But circumstances marched on rapidly. In 1865 he was rejected by Oxford University, and found himself, as he expressed it, "unmuzzled"—that is, free to declare his real opinions. Lord Palmerston was still living, and vain would have been the attempt to lead or drive him into the arms of Irish agitators. In 1866 Mr Gladstone fell back upon the old contrivance, a Reform Bill. But he was defeated on Lord Dunkellin's amendment, which proposed to substitute rating for the rental franchise; and in 1867 Lord Derby came into office, and Mr Disraeli settled

[1] Letter to Dr Hannah, Warden of Trinity College, June 8, 1865.

the Reform question on a basis which obviously could not be disturbed for some years. The "die" was now finally cast. All further hope of superseding Mr Disraeli in the Conservative party had to be abandoned. Reform was no longer available as a Liberal weapon. There was a large, chaotic vote ready to be won over by any one who was prepared to take a bold line on the question of Disestablishment. The Nonconformists, the Catholics, the Irish party, and the Radicals, might all be brought to act together in an assault upon the Irish Church. Mr Gladstone's lifelong convictions on the subject of Church Establishments began to fall to pieces concurrently with the discovery that Reform was, for some time to come, a broken reed, and that Disestablishment was "in the air," or to use his own somewhat unguarded words, speaking of the year 1865, "the wind was gradually veering to that quarter."[1] The Conservative Administration was apparently destined to have a long lease of power, unless the Liberal forces could be rallied under a new

[1] A Chapter of Autobiography, p. 45.

banner. In February 1868, Lord Derby resigned office, and Mr Disraeli became Prime Minister, to the mingled amazement and consternation of his eminent rival. Mr Gladstone suffered "inconvenience in the race of life," but only for a few weeks. The hour of "ripeness" had at last arrived.

In the early part of the session of 1868, he introduced and carried his Disestablishment resolutions,—few, if any, of the Liberals who then supported him having the least foreshadowing of the long and weary course which they would be compelled to traverse before Mr Gladstone's experiments with Ireland came to an end. For the moment all seemed to prosper. The combined movement was too much for Mr Disraeli and the Conservatives, the decision of a general election proved adverse to them, and in December 1868 Mr Gladstone had the satisfaction of becoming First Lord of the Treasury, in place of Mr Disraeli. The first movement in the Irish campaign was so successful that the hand which planned it was not likely ever to leave Ireland alone again.

Mr Gladstone's own account of these transactions is as follows:—

"Down to the year 1865, and the dissolution of that year, the whole question of the Irish Church was dead; nobody cared for it; nobody paid attention to it in England. Circumstances occurred which drew the attention of the people to the Irish Church. I said myself in 1865, and I believed, that it was out of the range of practical politics—that is to say, the politics of the coming election. When it came to this, that a great jail in the heart of the metropolis was broken open under circumstances which drew the attention of the English people to the state of Ireland; and when in Manchester policemen were murdered in the execution of their duty, at once the whole country became alive to Irish questions, and the question of the Irish Church revived. It came within the range of practical politics."[1]

Thus early, then, the master-key to Irish policy was furnished by Mr Gladstone—concession to force and violence. The Irish learnt the lesson by heart, and the "supple mediums" chosen by Mr Gladstone at more advanced stages of his work were never tired of warning the nation that resistance to the Irish would bring unnumbered evils upon its head—dyna-

[1] Speech at Dalkeith, November 26, 1879.

mite, revolution, resistance to the laws.[1] The Irish Fenian organisation never afterwards forgot that Mr Gladstone had specifically attributed to their operations the overthrow of the Irish Church. From that time forth their numbers increased, the contributions from America set in largely, the leaders acquired enormous influence in Ireland, and all hope of an era of peace and prosperity for Ireland was at an end. Let it never be forgotten that when the blight of Mr Gladstone's legislation began to fall upon Ireland, that country was in a state of prosperity which it had rarely attained before, and which it has never reached since. The relations between landlords and tenants were becoming more friendly; a larger area of land was under cultivation; the industrial resources of the country seemed likely to be rapidly developed by the influx of capital. In 1868, the potato crop in Ireland was estimated at 4,062,207 tons; in 1880 it was 2,985,859 tons. Wheat was grown in 1868 to the extent of 954,818 quarters, and oats

[1] See especially the speeches of Mr John Morley, throughout which this note of warning continually sounds.

7,628,857; in 1880 the quantities of each were 519,801 and 6,845,464. If Ireland could have been kept out of the arena of party conflicts a few years longer, and been allowed to pursue her way undisturbed by the struggle for power in England, there is every reason to believe that by this time she would have advanced far on the road towards substantial prosperity. But all was soon changed. The nation embarked upon an unknown and stormy sea, studded with shoals and rocks, and Mr Gladstone was the pilot. Lord Palmerston, Lord Aberdeen, and those who knew him well, would have had no difficulty in predicting the inevitable results. The bulk of the people, who did not know him, trusted themselves blindly to his guidance.

His speech in bringing forward the Disestablishment Bill, on the 1st of March 1869, formed the model for all his subsequent "orations" on Irish affairs. It is but fair to acknowledge that the public never grew tired of that model, but seemed to admire it more and more every time it was submitted to them. At last, one of Mr Gladstone's followers, who was

obliged to part from him on the Separation scheme, declared that the contemplation of it "benumbed his intellect." This sort of flattery was always welcome to Mr Gladstone, and it had hitherto marked out a man for early promotion. In truth, that Mr Gladstone's oratory "benumbed the intellect" is often the only rational explanation of its success. Amid a cloud of words, justice and reason are lost sight of. His pictures of the results of adopting his recommendations dazzled the eye, and the attempts to follow his arguments confused the mind. The general outline of the Irish speeches was vigorously sketched in 1869, but the colours became more vivid in later years. He admitted, in introducing his Disestablishment Bill, that the Act of Union was to be "altered" a little; but, he added, "we shall confidently contend that we are confirming its general purport and substance." There was nothing said about the "blackguardism" of the Act, nor was the wisdom of Pitt called in question. But it was a favourite argument for the Separation Bill of 1886 that the Act of Union had already once been broken by Mr Glad-

stone,[1] and that whatever it may have had about it of a sacred and binding character was gone. Mr Gladstone, indeed, appears to have anticipated this sequel to his measure. In speaking of the Irish Church in 1835, he said "he considered that they had abundant reasons for maintaining that Church, and if it should be removed, he believed that they would not be long able to resist the repeal of the Union."[2] The facts had not altered, though Mr Gladstone's opinion had. The mistake of the people consisted in their imagining that the laws which govern

[1] The Fifth Article runs as follows: "That it be the Fifth Article of Union that the Churches of England and Ireland, as now by law established, be united into one Protestant Episcopal Church, to be called the United Church of England and Ireland; and that the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the said United Church shall be and shall remain in full force for ever, as the same are now by law established for the Church of England; and that the continuance and preservation of the said United Church, as the Established Church of England and Ireland, shall be deemed and taken to be an essential and fundamental part of the Union; and that in like manner the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the Church of Scotland shall remain and be preserved as the same are now established by law, and by the Acts for the Union of the Two Kingdoms of England and Scotland."

[2] Hansard, vol. xxvii. p. 512 (March 31, 1835).

events were changed whenever Mr Gladstone announced that he had experienced a new conversion.

His measure of Disestablishment was so framed as to exasperate party feeling to the most intense degree. A great Whig authority, Lord Grey, put this very clearly before the world.[1] It was, he wrote—

"By no means impossible that if the question had not been used for the purpose of party warfare, a fair settlement of it might have been arrived at, and it needs no argument to prove how greatly such a settlement would have contributed to the welfare of the nation. But it was not the welfare of the nation, but party interest, which seems to have guided the conduct of Mr Gladstone. The resolutions he brought forward and the manner in which they were advocated made all compromise impossible, and in the electoral campaign when Parliament was dissolved, his speeches were calculated to inflame to the very utmost the fierce party passions of the Roman Catholics and Protestants in Ireland, and to kindle a spirit of hatred against this country in the minds of the Irish."

Yet, while sprinkling these dragon's teeth over a soil already filled with them, Mr Gladstone assured the country that peace and reconcilia-

[1] In a letter to the 'Times,' April 30, 1886.

tion would follow in the train of his measure. What he offered was "a settlement" of Irish grievances, and in that light his followers and the country accepted it. "I look at this great measure," said Mr Bright, "as tending to a more true and solid union between Ireland and Great Britain. I see it giving tranquillity to our people, greater strength to the realm, and new lustre and new dignity added to the Crown." Stripped of all the illusions of fancy, and deprived of all the romance which Mr Gladstone's "magic voice" threw around stern realities, these brilliant anticipations now present a different aspect. We have to set against dreams and visions, years of bloodshed and crime, a country plunged into confusion and misery, disloyalty too often triumphant, a revolutionary faction in the House of Commons, and a dynamite auxiliary force acting whenever new demands are to be brought within the "range of practical politics." Sir Robert Peel once said, "I will do anything to conciliate any portion of the people of Ireland that is just towards them, just also towards others. But, alas! we have had many warnings that conciliation and peace are not the

necessary results of concession and of intended kindness."[1] This warning would not have been listened to amid the infatuation of 1868; but eighteen years of stormy and mournful history have gone by, and an alarmed nation may perhaps be induced to turn from Mr Gladstone to his master, and see whether the advice and experience of Sir Robert Peel in Irish affairs may not even yet undo some of the evil effects of his example in other matters as a "versatile" politician.

The Irish Church fell, and Irish discontent increased. Canada was harried by the Fenians; agrarian agitation in Ireland grew more formidable; disorder was more difficult to quell; the demon of Irish disaffection became more menacing in its attitude. The summons to surrender once more reached Mr Gladstone. He responded to it with the Irish Land Bill of 1870. It was entirely a philanthropic measure. "We wish," said Mr Gladstone, "to alarm none; we wish to injure no one." The landlords had nothing to fear. "What we wish is," said the Visionary, whom the world still

[1] Speech in the House of Commons, April 25, 1834.

persisted, in the teeth of all warning and experience, in regarding as a Statesman, "that where there has been despondency, there shall be hope; where there has been mistrust, there shall be confidence; where there has been alienation and hate, there shall, however gradually, be woven the ties of a strong attachment between man and man." The people listened and believed, and if wisdom and oratory always went together, they would have been right in believing. But they had the failure of 1868-69 before them. Mr Gladstone's "peroration" blotted it all out. "My hope," he said, "is high and ardent that we shall live to see our work prosper in our hand, and that in that Ireland which we desire to unite to England and Scotland by the only enduring ties, those of free will and free affection, peace, order, and a settled and cheerful industry will diffuse their blessings from year to year, and from day to day, over a smiling land."[1]

In this measure, Mr Gladstone solemnly laid down certain "fundamental principles." He

[1] The quotations are taken from the speech on proposing the Land Bill of 1870, February 15th (revised by Mr Gladstone).

was opposed to a joint ownership in land. He was against fixity of tenure. He ridiculed the idea of calling upon the State to assist occupiers of the soil to become proprietors. Let every one who desires to judge fairly of Mr Gladstone's claims to public confidence as a practical statesman, and of the expediency of leaving him with a free hand to deal with the Irish difficulty, ponder well and carefully over these conditions of the Land Act of 1870. Fixity of tenure, said Mr Gladstone, was a principle "wholly unsustained by the slightest attempt at reasoning." "Perpetuity of tenure," he said on the 15th February, "on the part of the occupier, is virtually expropriation of the landlord. . . . The effect of that provision will be that the landlord will become a pensioner and rent-charger upon what is now his own estate." He protested strongly against any such legislation. Again, on the 11th of March he said, "Perpetuity of tenure is a phrase that I flatter myself is a little going out of fashion. If I have contributed anything towards it, I am not sorry." The occupiers of the land were not the "whole people" of Ireland. "And it

would, I think, be difficult to show why, in favour of these particular persons being occupiers, the whole essence of proprietary right should be carried over from the class that now possesses it to that which, though infinitely larger, is still a class, is not the whole people of the country." He referred to a proposition which had been suggested to establish a power in the hands of the State to reduce excessive rents. He fell upon this with even more than his usual animation, and tore it to pieces. "I own I have not heard, I do not know, and I cannot conceive," he said,[1] "what is to be said for the prospective power to reduce excessive rents." And as he afterwards demolished all his own argument in turn, and adopted the very course which he here denounces, his words must be quoted as they were uttered:

"Shall I really be told that it is for the interest of the Irish tenant bidding for a farm that the law should say to him, 'Cast aside all providence and forethought; go into the field and bid what you like; drive out of the field the prudent man who means to fulfil his engagement; bid right above him and induce the landlord to

[1] Speech in the House of Commons, March 11, 1870.

give you the farm, and the moment you have got it come forward, go to the public authority, show that the rent is excessive and that you cannot pay it, and get released.' If I could conceive a plan, first of all, for throwing into confusion the whole agricultural arrangements of the country; secondly, for driving out of the field all solvent and honest men who might be bidders for farms, and might desire to carry on the honourable business of agriculture; thirdly, for carrying widespread demoralisation throughout the whole mass of the Irish people, I must say, as at present advised—to confine myself to the present, and until otherwise convinced—it is this plan and this demand that we should embody in our Bill as a part of permanent legislation a provision by which men shall be told that there shall be an authority always existing ready to release them from the contracts they have deliberately made."[1]

All the suggestions thus covered with ridicule were incorporated by Mr Gladstone in his Land Bill of 1881. The very scheme which he scouted as absurd, and treated almost as the delusion of a disordered mind, he afterwards made his own. The Court to reduce rents was created, and as Mr Gladstone predicted in 1870, "widespread demoralisation" spread "throughout the whole mass of the Irish people." The extraordinary part of the history is, that although

[1] Speech in the House of Commons, March 11, 1870.

he had foretold this result of the plan, yet when he seriously produced the plan itself, and embodied it in an Act of Parliament, the nation neither evinced surprise nor made any objection. Thus, for the first time in our annals, we see the First Minister of the Crown coming forward and saying, in effect—"Here is a proposition which, if adopted, would bring the most grievous evils upon the country. I solemnly warn you against it." In a few years afterwards, we see him recommending this same proposition, and no one questions his wisdom on either occasion. In 1886, Mr Gladstone urged his Home Rule scheme upon the nation as a "final settlement," all his preceding measures having come with the same guarantee affixed to them. If "Home Rule" had been accepted, it would have cost Mr Gladstone no effort and no compunction to come forward, in due season, and allege that Parliament—for the whole blame would, as usual, be thrown upon Parliament—having committed itself to the principle of Irish independence, nothing remained but to take the one step still remaining, and agree to separation. There would be no more difficulty in finding good reasons for

that change of base than in finding reasons for the equally unlooked-for changes of 1868, 1870, 1881, and 1886.

The Land Bill of 1870 produced its natural result. The tenants saw that contracts might be broken by Act of Parliament, and that a little more pressure brought to bear upon Mr Gladstone would perhaps relieve them from the necessity of paying any rent whatever. The pressure was not withheld. The Home Rule agitation assumed a definite shape. "Ripeness" was again detected by Mr Gladstone. He threw down another of his garments to the hungry pack which was pursuing him. The Irish University Bill of 1873 was produced, and it was pressed upon the country in the old familiar strain. It was a measure "vital not only to the honour and existence of the Government, but to the welfare and prosperity of Ireland." The world has been assured, on the very highest authority, that Mr Gladstone at this time regarded his work in Ireland as finished. Ireland had no right to ask anything more. Her grievances were all redressed. This view was put forward, not in a speech which might easily

be contradicted, but in a pamphlet carefully written by Mr Gladstone for the purpose of striking a blow at the Papal power.[1] He remarked:—

"When Parliament had passed the Church Act of 1869, and the Land Act of 1870, *there remained only*, under the great head of Imperial equity, *one serious question to be dealt with*—that of the higher education. I consider that the Liberal majority of the House of Commons, and the Government to which I had the honour and satisfaction to belong, formally *tendered payment in full of this portion of the debt* by the Irish University Bill of February 1873. Some, indeed, *think that it was overpaid;* a question into which this is manifestly not the place to enter."

Then, having ascribed the defeat of his Bill to the action of the "Roman Catholic prelacy of Ireland," he added emphatically, "*the debt to Ireland had been paid.*"[2] Could any language make it more clear that Mr Gladstone did not appreciate or understand even the elements of the situation at that time—that he had no conception of the gravity of the crisis he was bringing upon the country, no insight into the

[1] The Vatican Decrees, p. 59. London: 1874.
[2] Ibid., p. 60.

character of the Irish people, or of the far-reaching designs of the Irish agitators, who were beginning to see that everything might be gained by playing skilfully upon the infirmities of Mr Gladstone's judgment, and upon his love of power? All that he had done thus far was to trifle and tamper with the Irish problem—the very error against which Burke might have warned him: "Above all things, I was resolved not to be guilty of tampering—the odious vice of restless and unstable minds."

In 1880 Mr Gladstone was brought back to power largely by the Irish vote. "In every constituency," the historian of the Parnellite party has told us, the Irish electors "marched in unbroken battalions to vote solidly Liberal."[1] Very soon the bills which had been lavishly drawn during the elections began to be presented for payment. But Mr Gladstone was no longer a suppliant; he was in office. His Irish allies could not help themselves if he chose to keep them waiting. What he had not calculated upon was their power—the power

[1] The Parnell Movement. By Mr T. P. O'Connor, M.P. P. 313.

which he had himself invoked—of "carrying widespread demoralisation throughout the whole ranks of the Irish people." The anti-rent warfare was opened, and the Parnellite leaders began to harass Mr Gladstone. Mr Parnell assailed him for having set the example of plundering landlords: "There are some persons very much better entitled to call him a little robber than he is entitled to call me a big one."[1] At the same time, Mr Parnell made no secret of his intentions. "The Land League," he said, "is not in favour of fixing rent, *but wants to abolish it.* We believe we can abolish it. Neither is it in favour of permanently fixing the landlords on the land. *We want to get rid of them.*"[2] Mr Gladstone, being in office, had no motive for refraining from protesting against this policy of brigandage; if he had been out of power, courting the Irish vote, he might have been as silent in 1881 as he was during the similar "plan of campaign" in the last months of 1886. He had nothing more, in October 1881, to expect from the Irish vote,

[1] Speech by Mr Parnell at Wexford, October 9, 1881.
[2] Speech at Strabane, August 30, 1881.

and therefore he went to Liverpool, and denounced Mr Parnell and his associates as men who were "marching through rapine to disintegration and dismemberment of the empire." Their immediate object was "rapine"—and he continued in words which will be engraved upon the tablets of history with a pen of iron, for to the very same men here described he offered, in 1886, to transfer the whole of Ireland, subject to a few reservations which would speedily have been swept away like chaff before the wind:—

"It is a great issue; it is a conflict for the very first and elementary principles upon which civil society is constituted. It is idle to talk of either law or order, or liberty or religion or civilisation, if these gentlemen are to carry through the reckless and chaotic schemes that they have devised. Rapine is the first object; but rapine is not the only object. It is perfectly true that these gentlemen wish to march through rapine to disintegration and dismemberment of the empire, and, I am sorry to say, even to the placing of different parts of the empire in direct hostility one with the other. That is the issue in which we are engaged."[1]

[1] Mr Gladstone at Liverpool, October 27, 1881—'Times' report, 28th October.

Nothing had changed in 1886 except Mr Gladstone's position. He was out of office instead of being in it; that was all the difference, and it was much. The men whom he denounced in 1881 were still pursuing the same design, without any attempt at concealment. But they held the balance of power in the House of Commons. Mr Gladstone therefore proposed to make them masters of Ireland.

The Land Bill of 1881 was the immediate fruit of the Parnellite threats in 1880. That bill, as we have seen, enacted all the principles repudiated by Mr Gladstone in 1870. A Court was established for fixing rents, but the rents so fixed were to be binding for fifteen years, "during which," said Mr Gladstone, "*there can be no change.*" In 1886 this solemn pledge went the way of all the others. It became inconvenient, and it was discarded. Mr Gladstone, despite all his guarantees and assurances, spoke and voted in favour of a bill introduced by Mr Parnell for still further cutting down the rents by one-half. Even his own unexampled career had thus far afforded no parallel to this cynical renunciation of principles which

were based upon the very rudiments of morality, and stood totally outside the field of politics.

The Land Bills did not in any degree satisfy the Irish agitators; they merely made the general problem more insoluble than ever, and deepened the conviction of the Irish people that law could be trampled under foot with impunity, and that the day of "no rent" was drawing nigh. Meanwhile, misery and desolation were being carried into thousands of homes. The amount of suffering and anguish which Mr Gladstone was the means of inflicting upon women and children—to say nothing of men—throughout Ireland, will never be known, but the victims of his experiments were starving, between the years 1882 and 1886, in half the capitals of Europe. Ladies, once in prosperous circumstances, were obliged to beg their bread; orphans were left totally helpless and friendless in the world. The newspapers of those years abounded with narratives of suffering which, if they had occurred in Naples, would have moved Mr Gladstone to indignation. Let but one instance be given from the public journals of the early part of December 1886:—

"Yesterday it was reported that an Irish gentleman had died in one of the North London workhouses, at the age of sixty-two, and was buried in the Union graveyard. Ten years ago he was drawing £1200 a-year from the property on which he lived in Ireland, but in 1879 his affairs became embarrassed through no fault of his own, and the revolt against rent completed his ruin. His wife died twelve months ago heartbroken. His only son has enlisted in the Foot Guards."

A lady was shot dead by the side of a kinsman, in the month of April 1882, while driving home from church. The kinsman wrote to Mr Gladstone: "I lay the guilt of the deed of blood at your door in the face of the whole country."[1] Mr Gladstone does not know, and probably would little heed it if he did know, how many wives who have "died heartbroken," and how many children who have been thrown upon the hard mercies of the world, have had to trace their grief and despair directly to his hand.

[1] Letter to Mr Gladstone from Mr W. B. Smythe, April 3, 1882.

V.

IRISH POLICY

1885-1886.

V.

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MUCH had been yielded to the Irish agitators; but more, and ever more, was continually their cry. They decided to oppose the Liberal party at the general elections of 1885. Their reasons were given, by Mr Parnell's authority, in a document addressed to all the constituencies in the United Kingdom.[1] The Irish leaders look upon each of the regular parties as tools to be used and flung aside when done with; and in the autumn of 1885 they were in the mood for dealing frankly with Mr Gladstone and his followers. The testimony of the Parnellite chiefs

[1] Signed by Mr T. P. O'Connor, Mr Sexton, and the leaders of the party generally.

to the merits of the Liberal party is at least worth remembering:—

"To Ireland, more than to any other country, it bound itself by the most solemn pledges, and these it most flagrantly violated. It denounced coercion, and practised a system of coercion more brutal than that of any previous administration, Liberal or Tory. Under this system juries were packed with a shamelessness unprecedented even in Liberal Administrations, and innocent men were being sent to the living death of penal servitude. Twelve hundred men were imprisoned without trial; ladies were convicted under an obsolete Act directed against the degraded of their sex; and for a period every utterance of the popular press and of the popular feeling was as completely suppressed as if Ireland were Poland, and the administration of England a Russian autocracy. Under such circumstances we feel bound to advise our countrymen to place no confidence in the Liberal or Radical party, and so far as in them lies to prevent the Government of the empire falling into the hands of a party so perfidious, treacherous, and incompetent. . . . We advise our countrymen to vote against the men who coerced Ireland, deluged Egypt with blood, menaced religious liberty in schools and freedom of speech in Parliament, and promised the country generally a repetition of the crimes and follies of the last Liberal Administration."

Mr Gladstone's reply was the celebrated appeal to the country to give him a majority over

the Conservatives and the Parnellites combined. The country refused. Still, it supposed that he was adverse to further concessions to Mr Parnell, whereas, as events afterwards showed, he was preparing his mind, in case of defeat, for all and any concessions that might be demanded. The testimony given on this point by Mr Bright is as conclusive as it is beyond all suspicion :—

"You say it is a gross charge to say that you concealed your thoughts last November. Surely when you urged the constituencies to send you a Liberal majority large enough to make you independent of Mr Parnell and his party, the Liberal party and the country understood you to ask for a majority to *enable you to resist Mr Parnell, not to make a complete surrender to him.*" [1]

The elections left the Parnellite party in control of Parliament. They could turn out one Ministry and make another whenever they pleased. Lord Salisbury was in office, and the Queen's Speech at the opening of the first session of 1886 sufficiently indicated what his course would be. He intended to restore order, to check terrorism, and to have the law carried out in Ireland as it is in England. Mr Parnell

[1] Letter from Mr Bright to Mr Gladstone, July 4, 1886.

was not to be the Prime Minister. Such an attitude involved the downfall of the Ministry. Mr Gladstone, looking eagerly on, once more perceived the signs of "ripeness." Another conversion, the greatest of all, began to work in his mind. In 1865 he had written to a friend: "There have been two great deaths, or transmigrations of spirit, in my political existence. One very slow, the breaking of ties with my original party; the other, very short and sharp, the breaking of the tie with Oxford. There will probably be a third, and no more." There is little doubt that when these words were written Mr Gladstone had in his mind's eye the disestablishment of the English Church. But as often as he has stretched out his hand to do that work, he has faltered and drawn it back. The sword had two edges. He kept so dangerous a question in reserve. In 1885 the third seal was to be opened, and opened in Ireland.

As to the extent of his new conversion, and its momentous character, nothing need be said; as to the rapidity with which it was completed, the evidence of two of Mr Gladstone's former

colleagues—the ablest of all his colleagues—is quite decisive. Mr Gladstone thought proper to assert, after his capitulation to Mr Parnell, that for fifteen years he had never spoken against Home Rule. He had chosen this period of "new departure" with his usual dexterity; for just fifteen years before,[1] he delivered a speech at Aberdeen in which he vehemently declared that Parliament had done all for Ireland that ought to be demanded, and that there were no inequalities left between Ireland and England, "except that there are certain taxes still remaining which are levied upon Scotsmen and Englishmen, and not levied upon Ireland." He ridiculed the idea of breaking up "the fabric of the United Parliament," and asked, "Can any sensible man, can any rational man, suppose that at this time of day, in this condition of the world, we are going to disintegrate the great capital institutions of the country for the purpose of making ourselves ridiculous in the sight of all mankind, and crippling any power we possess for bestowing benefits, through legislation, on the country to

[1] On the 26th September 1871.

which we belong?" His argument was unanswerable, and it is presumed that he adjudged it to be so in 1886, for he made no attempt to answer it. He merely said, in effect, "I have not been opposed to Home Rule since I made that speech." He desired the nation to infer that he had been in favour of Home Rule since 1871. But once again he stands convicted by the hard facts. Lord Hartington has said:[1]—

"We must assume, I think, that if Mr Gladstone has never for fifteen years condemned the principle of Home Rule, it was because he had given assent in his own mind to that principle. That raised some rather serious questions. During those fifteen years Mr Gladstone has twice been Prime Minister, and twice he has had much to do with Irish policy and with Irish legislation. During the first part of that period I myself had the honour of serving as Chief Secretary for Ireland in Mr Gladstone's Government. From 1870 to 1874 I filled that office, and I think I can assert, without fear of contradiction, that neither the Lord Lieutenant, Lord Spencer, nor myself at that time had the slightest notion that Mr Gladstone was favourably disposed to accept the principle of Home Rule. It was my duty at that time, as it has been the duty of many other Chief Secretaries, to introduce a bill into the House of Commons for

[1] Speech at Sheffield, June 29, 1886.

amending the system of county government in Ireland. I do not recollect that Mr Gladstone ever told us that he considered that measure miserably inadequate to the wants of Ireland. Neither can I recollect that the Government of which he was the head, gave us much assistance or support in Parliament in pressing forward and carrying to a successful conclusion that measure, which was at all events a small step in the direction of giving greater self-government to Ireland. At that period I was under the impression that I was perhaps more a Home Ruler than Mr Gladstone was himself, for I remember that it was my duty to prepare and to submit for the consideration of my colleagues a measure —no doubt a small measure, but, I think, not an unimportant measure—which would have been another small step in the direction of Home Rule."

He went on to remark that he could not even get Mr Gladstone's attention to this question, and that when Mr Gladstone came into power in 1880, he appointed Mr Forster Irish Secretary—Mr Forster, who had always opposed the Home Rule scheme. How Mr Gladstone subsequently treated Mr Forster—sacrificing him in order that he might conclude the Kilmainham Treaty with Mr Parnell, and leaving him to the vengeance of the "rebel" party—Lord Hartington did not describe, but history will not be silent about it.

Mr Chamberlain's statement to his constituents at Birmingham was equally emphatic:—

"I have said I will not refer to what Mr Gladstone said a long while ago, but you know I was his colleague from 1880 to 1885, and I can say this, that during the whole of that time I had no intimation—I had not the slightest conception—that Mr Gladstone had it in his mind at any time to propose the creation of an independent Parliament in Ireland. I will come even later than that. You remember that in 1885 there were rumours about his intentions, reports of statements made by his son, Mr Herbert Gladstone, and at last there appeared in the 'Standard' newspaper a distinct statement that Mr Gladstone intended to propose a Parliament for Ireland. What did he do? He contradicted the statement; he caused a communication to be sent to the papers to say that the statement was not an accurate representation of his views, but that he supposed it was a speculation upon them; and the 'Daily News,' the Liberal organ, took advantage of this contradiction to write that Mr Gladstone had disposed for ever of the sinister design which was imputed to him by his Tory opponents. These are statements of fact; and what follows from it?—that it is perfectly evident that this idea of a separate Parliament has only entered into Mr Gladstone's mind within the last few months. And I will undertake to say that until it entered into his mind it had not suggested itself to one in a thousand of ordinary Liberals."

But it scarcely needed these witnesses to

disprove Mr Gladstone's assertion, for he had repeatedly, since 1871, denounced Mr Parnell and his followers as men whose "footsteps were dogged by crime"; and in 1880 he had passionately declared in the House of Commons that "her Majesty's Government would be less than children in the practice of the business of the State and Parliament if they could be so weak as to suppose it was possible to bring the policy recommended by them to Parliament into harmony with the objects which the hon. member for Cork (Mr Parnell) is believed to pursue."[1] That was the very end which Mr Gladstone set himself to accomplish in 1886.

The latter portion of Mr Chamberlain's remarks relate to a series of incidents which have already been briefly touched upon in these pages, but which must now receive the fuller attention they deserve.

As soon as it was seen that Mr Parnell was master of the situation, and that he could make Mr Gladstone Prime Minister at any moment, subterranean communications were opened up between Hawarden Castle and the Parnellite

[1] Hansard, vol. cclii. p. 1654.

camp. The chief agent was Mr Herbert Gladstone, one of the members for Leeds, who has often been found useful in work of that peculiar nature, which his distinguished father could not, consistently with dignity, or even of decorum, openly perform. Mr Herbert Gladstone was fresh from a "campaign" of his own, and he had boasted to the people of his inflexible intention to drive "nails" into the "coffins" of all who were his father's enemies—that is to say, of all who had presumed to criticise the policy of Mr Gladstone the elder. Among the doomed persons was a stanch old Radical, Mr Peter Rylands, for whom, said Mr H. Gladstone, "I have reserved the longest nail." He further avowed his purpose of driving it "right through," so that Mr Rylands would be well "pinned" to his coffin. But the people of Burnley refused to have their representative thus "laid out" by the pious hands of young Mr Gladstone, and the long nail was reserved for quite a different coffin.

Now, in the early days of December, the nail-driver was seen to be in active communication with certain journalists and wire-pullers of Leeds. He sent a message from Hawarden,

in which he said, "If five-sixths of the Irish people wish to have a Parliament in Dublin, for the management of their own local affairs, I say, in the name of justice and wisdom, let them have it." These words did not attract much attention at the time, for after all it was only Mr Herbert Gladstone who uttered them; but there were some experienced observers, familiar with the Gladstonian method of operations, who knew that when certain marionettes move, an expert "old parliamentary hand" must be at work somewhere behind the curtain. Events soon proved that there was only too much ground for these suspicions. Whether any signals were exchanged between the Parnellite leaders and Mr Gladstone himself, is not yet known to the world. Some day, doubtless, Mr Parnell, or one of his lieutenants, will tell all that can be told, for they are not apt to underrate the value of any "revelations," real or imaginary, which they are able to make. It is no secret that during the first session of 1886 daily communications were carried on between Mr Gladstone and his Ministry on the one hand, and Mr Parnell or his representatives on

the other. Nothing was more common, for instance, than to see Sir William Harcourt—the author of the "ironclad" Coercion Bill of 1882—in close consultation with the identical men whom he had denounced as a "cancerous sore," to be "cut out with the surgeon's knife." Sir William Harcourt "took" conversion from his chief, almost as easily as some other of the new Liberal "leaders," who went about boasting that they had "found salvation."

That many other conferences were held prior to the meeting of Parliament in 1886 is probable; but that Mr Gladstone was always in a position to assert that he had taken no part in them is even more probable. No one can allege that he has ever been guilty of clumsiness or imprudence in delicate negotiations of this character. Obviously, however, it was necessary that the Parnellites should be prepared to meet Mr Gladstone in a proper spirit at the opening of the session. Therefore, on the 17th December 1885, a *communiqué* appeared in most of the papers to the effect that Mr Gladstone had "formulated" a scheme for Ireland, and that it included the following

main provisions: (1) A separate Parliament in Dublin; (2) the police to be handed over to the Irish Parliament, subject to a "guarantee" that they should not be used "as a cover and protection for lawlessness;" (3) the Crown to be permitted to exercise a veto on the proceedings of the Irish Parliament, but only "on the advice of the Irish Ministry." The statement continued thus :—

"Mr Gladstone is sanguine that this policy of settling the Irish question once for all will commend itself to the majority of his party and to the English people, when it is clearly understood that no other course can bring real peace. If he is enabled to eject the Government on this issue, he will have a large majority in the House of Commons for his Irish Bill; and he believes that the House of Lords, weighing the gravity of the situation, will not reject it. Should there be a sufficient defection of the moderate Liberals to encourage the Lords to throw out the Bill, a dissolution would be inevitable; but, except in the event of any serious explosion in Ireland that would have the effect of exasperating the popular feeling in England against the Irish, the country would in all probability endorse Mr Gladstone's policy, and give him an unmistakable mandate to carry it into law."

It was also mentioned that there was "reasonable expectation that both Lord Hartington and

Mr Goschen would come round to Mr Gladstone's views," while Mr Chamberlain "could not consistently oppose them." Mr Gladstone had made all his calculations, and they showed as the general result that power was again within his grasp. There was one contingency which he did not take into account—namely, that Lord Hartington and all the other Liberals of great ability and of great influence in the country would be swayed in their action by patriotism rather than by thirst for office. In the cleverest of schemes there is a weak point somewhere, and this weak point in Mr Gladstone's design involved him in ignominious defeat and overthrow.

The manifesto of the 17th December spread consternation in the Liberal ranks. As there was no good purpose to be served by a premature alarm, and as it was thought advisable to allow the "timid brethren" a little time to get accustomed to the new policy, Mr Gladstone made a short appearance upon the scene in his own person. He did not repudiate the manifesto, and declare that it was a fiction—it is now absolutely certain that he was not

able to deal with it in that way—but he tried to produce the same effect in his usual adroit manner. The statement in question was not, he said, "an accurate expression of his views." Perhaps it was "a speculation upon them." It was so good a "speculation" that when the Bill itself was introduced, it was almost impossible to tell one from the other.

When the House of Commons met for business on the 21st of January, it was quite clear to all who could look beneath the surface that the preliminaries of another treaty had been arranged between Mr Gladstone and Mr Parnell. In speaking on the Address, Mr Gladstone, though using all the artifice of which he is master, was obliged to let fall certain expressions which showed that he had enlisted in the service of the "uncrowned king." He turned almost wholly to the Parnellites when he spoke; his manner towards them was studiously deferential, almost obsequious; they applauded him till the chamber rang with their shouts. He did not want to be "controversial"; he invoked the "blessing" which usually ornaments his speeches. But there was some-

thing much more significant than all this. In the Royal Speech, an allusion was made to the Act of Union with Ireland as a "fundamental law." Mr Gladstone saw his opportunity in that phrase. He turned again to the Irish benches, and declared that the phrase "fundamental law" was not known to the British Constitution, although he might have remembered those very words applied to the Act of Union, in almost every speech on Ireland which had been made by English Ministers, from the days of Pitt downwards. His object, however, was accomplished. The Parnellites understood him, and an announcement—not without significance to the discerning—at once appeared in the newspapers: "Mr Gladstone has not taken a house in London this season." In other words, he had made up his mind to go to Downing Street.

So far, the scheme worked precisely as Mr Gladstone had anticipated. Mr Jesse Collings placed on the paper an amendment which soon came to be known as the "three acres and a cow trick." It was, of course, pressed forward before the Government had time to produce

Irish measures, or any other measures. Mr Gladstone had over and over again protested that he was anxious to give Lord Salisbury an opportunity of suggesting legislation for Ireland. But he could not wait. "He took the very earliest opportunity," said Lord Hartington afterwards—and Lord Hartington's evidence on this point is an overwhelming refutation of Mr Gladstone's professions—"of ejecting the Conservative party from office."[1] An official whip was issued—certainly not without the knowledge of the leader of the party—for the support of Mr Jesse Collings's amendment. Mr Gladstone made a speech in its favour; he energetically called upon his party to support it, he voted for it, and by its means he was made Prime Minister of England. He afterwards treated Mr Collings as he had treated many an instrument of much greater importance. He not only turned his back upon him, but practically denied all knowledge of him and his amendment. "There is *a certain Mr Jesse Collings*," he said;[2] "*I believe* he is the man who

[1] Speech in the House of Commons, 9th April 1886.

[2] Speech at Liverpool, June 28, 1886.

promised the three acres and a cow. *I have never shared in that promise.*" The defeat of Lord Salisbury's Government, on the 26th of January, was expressly upon Mr Collings's amendment. Consider this fact in connection with Mr Gladstone's statement at Liverpool, and then let the psychologist decide, if he can, whether it is memory which is absent from Mr Gladstone's organisation, or some moral quality.

Mr Parnell's share in the transaction was completed, and Mr Gladstone was once more in office. He rendered what was required of him in return by producing the "Home Rule" Bill on the 8th of April, and the "Land Purchase Bill" on the 16th. As for the latter Bill, he declared that it was an "obligation of honour and of policy that Great Britain should undertake it."[1] It was to be "adopted under serious convictions both of honour and of duty." There is a strong probability, founded upon his past history, that any step or measure which Mr Gladstone urges upon the country as an obligation of honour and of duty, will sooner or later be cast under his feet and trampled upon. So

[1] Speech on introducing the Bill, April 16, 1886.

it happened with the Land Purchase Bill. Under the pretext that the landlords had rejected it—although they never had the opportunity of declaring an opinion upon it, one way or the other—Mr Gladstone abandoned it with every sign of aversion and contempt. For so much did the "obligation of honour" count with him in the last stage of his life.

The two bills as originally presented to the House gave a separate Parliament to Ireland, with an independent Executive. The constabulary, which had remained loyal to the Crown through so many periods of trial and danger, were ultimately to be placed at the mercy of Mr Parnell and his followers. On this point, some of Mr Gladstone's supporters attempted to raise confusion, but his own language was unmistakable.[1] "One thing I must say. We have no desire to exempt the police of Ireland in its final form from the ultimate control of the legislative body—(Home Rule cheers)." The Irish constabulary were to be betrayed, like Mr Gladstone's early colleagues, like Lord Palmerston in the midst of the Crimean war, like the

[1] Speech in House of Commons, April 8, 1886.

loyal colonists in South Africa, like the devoted allies who fought for us in Egypt, like the heroic soldier who went out to rescue a falling Ministry from shame and dishonour, and who had his memory assailed, by the man he went to save, for rashness and foolhardiness. Such a strain upon the fidelity of the Irish constabulary might have produced a terrible disaster, if the force had been composed of less resolute men, or if there had not been a hope in the background that the English people would interfere to prevent so great a wrong.

The judges, the magistrates, the civil service—all were to be sent adrift by the Nationalists; and Ulster, and the Protestants generally, were to be placed under the authority of the very men they had most reason to dread. But this was not all. The Parnellites, and the party in America, upon which they depend for support, have never pretended that they want anything but separation. They consented to take the Irish Parliament, because they saw that, when they obtained that, separation would follow as a matter of course. Mr Parnell professed to close with Mr Gladstone's proposal,

though with many reservations; but he had no power to bind his party. He was candid enough to admit this in a speech at Cork on the 21st of January 1886:—

"We cannot, under the British Constitution, ask for more than the restitution of Grattan's Parliament. But no man has the right to fix the boundary to the march of a nation; no man has a right to say to his country, 'Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther;' and we have never attempted to fix the *ne plus ultra* to the progress of Ireland's nationhood, and we never shall. While we struggle to-day for that which may seem possible for us with our combination, we must struggle for it with the proud consciousness that we shall not do anything to hinder or prevent better men who may come after us from gaining better things than those for which we now contend."

A plainer warning could not have been given that "final" settlements were not in Mr Gladstone's power to make, or in Mr Parnell's to accept. But Mr Gladstone invariably sees things as he would have them to be, not as they are. He was quite satisfied that he had at length reached the limit of concession. Yet Patrick Ford, the Irish leader in America, from whom upwards of $1,000,000 has been received by Mr Parnell

for the "war on England," told him clearly that he was once more the dupe of his own imagination. "A careful examination of the text of Mr Gladstone's bill," wrote Mr Ford in his journal,[1] shows "that it is a scheme which is not, in its present form, workable, and if put in operation somehow, it *would originate strong separatist tendencies in Ireland.* If the Britishers can stand this, we can." Mr Michael Davitt, the founder of the Fenian organisation, echoed the suggestive hints of Mr Parnell. The bill might be accepted for a time, *but* "there is no finality in human progress, nor can limits be arbitrarily set to the onward march of a nation."[2] Against the warnings—thinly disguised, or openly uttered—of Parnell, Patrick Ford, and Michael Davitt, Mr Gladstone had nothing better to urge than his old exploded and worn-out prophecies, that if the nation put implicit confidence in him, all would be well.

But the bills were not passed. Upon the rejection of the first, Mr Gladstone angrily

[1] The Irish World, May 2, 1886.
[2] Speech at Chicago, August 14, 1886.

appealed to the country. He shifted his ground warily. He declared that the bills were dead, and upon that representation a certain proportion of his followers escaped defeat. They protested, each more loudly than the other, that the whole scheme was not only dead but buried; and not a few managed to get re-elected expressly on that assurance, though, in most cases, with diminished majorities. Among the public men who refused to hoodwink their constituents, or to be hoodwinked themselves, was Mr Bright.

"We are asked," he remarked in his address,[1] "to pledge ourselves to a 'principle,' which may be innocent or most dangerous as it may be explained or insisted on in the future bills. I cannot give any such pledge. The experience of the past three months does not increase my confidence in the wisdom of the Administration or of their policy with respect to the future government of Ireland. We have before us a 'principle' which is not explained by its author or its supporters, and I will not pledge myself to what I do not understand or to what I cannot approve."

And he added these pregnant words:—

"I cannot trust the peace and interests of Ireland,

[1] Dated Rochdale, June 24th [1886].

north and south, to the Irish parliamentary party, to whom the Government now propose to make a general surrender. My six years' experience of them, of their language in the House of Commons and of their deeds in Ireland, makes it impossible for me to consent to hand over to them the property and the rights of five millions of the Queen's subjects, our countrymen, in Ireland. At least two millions of them are as loyal as the population of your town, and I will be no party to a measure which will thrust them from the generosity and justice of the United and Imperial Parliament. . . . It is because I am still the friend of Ireland that I refuse to give her up to those to whom the recently defeated bill would have subjected her."

Other candidates were less scrupulous; but after making all allowances, the rout was tolerably complete. The great Liberal party had gone into the election 333 strong; it came out with only 190 Gladstonians and 77 Liberal Unionists. The Conservatives went in with 250 members, and came out with 317. Then Mr Gladstone struck off in another direction.

Once or twice already after a defeat, he had endeavoured to stir up sectional strife between various portions of the country—setting Scotland against England, and Wales against Scot-

land, and Ireland against them all, or all against her, just as circumstances seemed to suggest. He now resumed this work in a more scientific manner. He had led up to it in introducing his Home Rule Bill, on the 8th of April 1886. Standing in the House of Commons as Prime Minister of England, he told the Irish people that they were being governed by foreigners. This, indeed, was a favourite expedient with him. Once, in speaking to a Scotch audience,[1] he made an allusion to the administration of a person's effects, and he immediately added, "I beg pardon for using a *foreign* term — you use the term inventory." This, however, was but a gentle approach to the subject. He took a bolder flight when he declared in the House of Commons,[2] "that law is discredited in Ireland upon this ground especially, that it comes to the people of that country with a foreign aspect and in a foreign garb." And again, on the 10th of May, he said, "Why, sir, we have to deal with the greatest of all causes that can solicit the attention of a Legislature—namely, the fact that we have to treat the case of a

[1] September 1, 1884. [2] April 8, 1886.

country where the radical sentiment of the people is not in sympathy with the law." Language of this kind had frequently been heard from the lips of the leaders of Irish rebellion, and from moonlighters and cattle-mutilators; but the chief Minister of the Crown had never before used anything distantly resembling it.

Throughout the general election which Mr Gladstone precipitated upon the country in June 1886—for a *plébiscite* had by this time become as dear to him as ever it was to Louis Napoleon—he incessantly laboured to set the "masses" against the "classes," and to let loose upon the land the evil spirits of rancour, jealousy, and hatred. At Liverpool, on the 29th of June, he said: "On this question, I am sorry to say, there is class against the mass, classes against the nation. Will the nation show enough unity and determination to overbear constitutionally and at the poll that resistance of the classes? It is very material that we should consider which is likely to be right. Are we likely to be right? Are the classes ever right when they differ from the nation?"

To Scotland and Wales he practically said, "Help Ireland to get her Parliament, and afterwards she will help each of you to one of your own." Looking on at all this, a well-known Radical came forward and made this public protest:—

"I have seen the American demagogue at his worst, and when the ordinary passions of faction were further inflamed by the fury of civil war; but never did I witness so deliberate an attempt to set class against class and to poison the heart of society for a party purpose, as has been made by the Prime Minister in the present campaign."[1]

Fortunately for England, the honesty and the common-sense of the mass of her working classes were too deeply seated to be overturned, even by the man in whom so many of them had placed implicit trust. They rejected Mr Gladstone's proffered bribes, and pronounced emphatically against the destruction of the ancient Parliament of the country, and the division of the United Kingdom into discordant sections. When other Ministers have appealed

[1] Professor Goldwin Smith—letter to the 'Times,' July 9, 1886.

to the country, they have usually abided by the decision. Mr Gladstone, after his defeat, simply strove harder than before to promote disunion and to give support and encouragement to the Irish disloyalists. "I am glad," he wrote to a Scotch correspondent,[1] "to see that in the manifesto you have taken a step towards the free and full consideration in and by Scotland how far the present Parliament and Governmental arrangements are suited to her wants." In his pamphlet on 'The Irish Question,' published in August, he had scattered the seed far and wide:—

"What is not less likely, and even more important, is that the sense of nationality, both in Scotland and in Wales, set astir by this controversy, may take a wider range than heretofore. Wales, and even Scotland, may ask herself, whether the present system of intrusting all their affairs to the handling of a body, English in such overwhelming proportion as the present Parliament is, and must probably always be, is an adjustment which does the fullest justice to what is separate and specific in their several populations. Scotland, which for a century and a quarter after her Union was refused all taste of

[1] Letter, dated Hawarden Castle, September 29, 1886.

a real representative system, may begin to ask herself whether, if at the first she felt something of an unreasoning antipathy, she may not latterly have drifted into a superstitious worship, or at least an irreflective acquiescence."

On the 4th of December 1886, he wrote to another correspondent in Scotland: "When Scotland has taken hold of an idea she does not readily give it up. She lost no time in making up her mind to the policy to be pursued towards Ireland. I anticipate that she will press for it more and more, and I shall be glad if it should set her on obtaining for herself some well-considered measure appropriate to her case and needs, should she find occasion so to do." Thus, in every way that could be devised, he laboured as vigorously to break up the empire as Pitt, Canning, Palmerston, and Beaconsfield had striven to consolidate and strengthen it. The results were soon visible in all parts of our possessions. In India the native agitators convoked "mass meetings" to demand "home rule" for their country. What was good for Ireland was good also for them, and Mr Gladstone's conditions met their case,

for law undoubtedly came to them in a "foreign garb." In Scotland and Wales, Home Rule meetings were held, and a separate Parliament was demanded. The Parnellite party had a great reception in Mr Gladstone's house at Hawarden, were *fêted* and flattered to their hearts' content, and had a speech of five columns in length delivered to them. Mr Bright's comment upon these proceedings was guarded, but sufficient:—

"The course taken by Mr Gladstone since the close of the session has astonished me, and has given me great trouble. His speaking and writing, and especially his reception of the Irish deputation, seem to me to have driven him so far in a wrong course that we can have no hope of any more moderate policy from him. . . . At this moment his allies in Ireland—Dillon, O'Brien, and Co.—are driving matters to an extremity, and he and Mr Parnell say not a word to arrest or lessen the calamity which I fear is impending."[1]

On the 14th of December, Mr Osborne Morgan told a Welsh meeting[2] that Wales did not mean to be left out in the cold. "It was

[1] Letter read by Lord Hartington at the Liberal Unionist Meeting, December 7, 1886.

[2] At Rhyl—'Times' report, December 15, 1886.

said that the Welsh were not a nation. There was only one way of meeting that assertion, by showing that they were one." It seemed probable that if Mr Gladstone lived ten years longer, he would do his best to turn Canning's sneer into a reality, and restore the Heptarchy.

Concurrently with the Disunion agitation, he managed, on the very first day of the second session of 1886 (August 19th), to throw out the signal for a new war against rent. He acted cautiously, but the Irish saw what he meant. They are not slow to take a hint. He discussed the question of rent; but, as a matter of course, he "expressed no opinion." He merely pointed out that the crop *might* fail, and then —well, then, said Mr Gladstone, "we know the opinion that prevails in Ireland." "I give no opinion," he added, but "it is the opinion of the large portion of the [Irish] community, that in consequence of the changes in agricultural values, there is a difficulty of maintaining the judicial rents"—those judicial rents which Mr Gladstone solemnly pledged himself should be unaltered and unalterable for fifteen years. Once more all his promises, all his guarantees,

all his appeals to honour, and even to honesty, were flung behind his back, and he advanced hand in hand with Mr Parnell on the "march to rapine and dismemberment of the empire."

Mr Parnell needed no further incitement to go on. He produced a bill for reducing rents 50 per cent, and it was rejected; no Legislature could possibly have accepted it, save a Legislature such as that which Governor Moses and a horde of negro banditti set up in South Carolina after the war. On the 24th of August, Mr Gladstone, replying in the House of Commons to the assertion that he had become the leader of the Nationalists, said he was "delighted to have had any share or part in encouraging the Irish people to hope for the realisation of their just claims," and then he let fall another hint, which was welcomed with shouts of joy by the Irish party. "In Ireland," he said, "law is not administered in an Irish spirit. With that state of facts staring you in the face, we may teach legality, and we shall teach it to the best of our power, but you *cannot give security for social order in Ireland.*" And this was said to men, and of men, who

had declared not long before in Chicago that "the policy of Ireland would soon be one of fight," and that it was their duty to "make the government of Ireland by England an impossibility." What construction but one could such men as these put upon Mr Gladstone's words?

Out of those words there sprang the "Plan of Campaign," under which the Irish tenantry were persuaded or compelled to pay such a portion of their rent as they chose to agents of the National League, who undertook to make the landlords settle on the tenants' terms, or to keep them out of their rent altogether. There was no question of ability or inability to pay. Proclamation was made that nobody was obliged to pay, and it was seen that Mr Gladstone and his followers stood ready, if not openly to support that programme, at least to oppose the Government in any attempt to interfere with it. A general conspiracy against the payment of rent, the same in character, though not in form, was energetically denounced by Mr Gladstone in 1881 as "confiscation," "spoliation," and "rapine," an attack upon the "foundations of society." He called upon "all

orders and degrees of men in these two kingdoms—in these three kingdoms—to support the Government." But in 1886 he was in intimate and cordial alliance with the conspirators. Indirectly, he allowed a few sentences to appear in his name mildly deprecating "violence," but he had not a syllable to utter in defence of the law, or in condemnation of the "Plan of Campaign." His "supple mediums" spoke of resistance to the law as the only means of forcing the Government to comply with their demands—an amplification of the doctrine laid down by their chief concerning the Clerkenwell explosion. Mr Morley, the consistent advocate of the principle of unlimited concession to threats, reminded the Irish agitators that "the Parliament at Westminster" always "failed to do its duty unless the pressure put upon it was such that it could not be be resisted."[1] "Ireland," continued the advocate of French atheism and French anarchists, "has got nothing, except by making her resistance felt." This was said at a time when

[1] Speech at Hawick, November 30, 1886—'Times,' December 1st.

the Irish agitators were inciting the people to break the law by refusing *en masse* to pay their debts. Moreover, Mr Morley had come fresh from Hawarden, with a special message from Mr Gladstone, and with the report that the Liberal leader was in "good condition." Perhaps Mr Gladstone might have preferred a very different messenger; but when Lord Hartington, Mr Chamberlain, Mr Bright, Sir Henry James, and all who could carry weight in the country had been driven from his side, he was compelled to fall back on such substitutes as he could find, and they did their work according to their means.

The new "germs" carried by Mr Morley from Hawarden were not long dormant. "Make your resistance felt"—such was the "message of peace." Three or four days afterwards the newspapers had to report the outbreak of a more dangerous spirit than ever in Ireland. "A combined and simultaneous attack is made upon the Government at different points. There can be no doubt that, in pursuance of a common purpose, a determined and persistent effort is made to increase and multiply the

embarrassments of the Executive, and to show that there is really no authority in Ireland, and virtually no law but that of the League."[1] On the 5th of December, Mr Dillon boasted that the National League would soon have the government of Ireland entirely in their own hands. "The time is at hand," he said,[2] "when the police will be our servants, when the Irish police will be taking their pay from Mr Parnell, when he will be Prime Minister of Ireland," and *then* "we will remember them." "We are not the men to forget who stood up against the people." Mr Gladstone's mouthpiece had spoken at Hawick, and this was the echo. Disorder was again let loose. In 1868, when referring to Fenian outrages, Mr Gladstone was disposed to trace them to the hand of Providence. "These painful and horrible manifestations," he said, "may perhaps, in the merciful designs of Providence—without in the slightest degree acquitting the authors of responsibility—have been intended to invite this nation to greater

[1] The 'Times,' December 4, 1886.

[2] Speech at Castlereagh, County Roscommon, December 5, 1886.

search of its own heart and spirit and conscience with reference to the condition of Ireland, and the legislation affecting that country." Mr Gladstone has often undertaken to interpret the will of Providence to the English people, but he has seldom done it through so strange a channel as Mr Morley, who once thought that he had dethroned the Almighty by spelling his name with a little *g*,[1] and whose views concerning Providence are thus defined: "It really seems to be no more criminal to produce children with the deliberate intention of abandoning them to public charity, as Rousseau did, than it is to produce them in deliberate reliance on the besotted maxim that he who sends mouths will send meat, or any other of the spurious saws which make providence do duty for self-control, and add to the gratification of physical appetite the grotesque luxury of religious unction."[2] Working men and women, whose anxieties are sometimes lightened by the humble hope that the Supreme Power will prosper their

[1] God is uniformly spelt god throughout the Essay on Rousseau (2 vols., 1873).

[2] Rousseau, by John Morley, vol. i. pp. 124, 125.

efforts to maintain their children, may learn from Mr Morley the crime of which they have been guilty. That Mr Gladstone should have selected a man to assist him in expounding the will of Providence who has done everything a public writer can do to insult Christians and the Christian religion, who holds that there is no God, no future life, no hope beyond this world, and "that the black and horrible grave is indeed the end of our communion [with friends], and that we know each other no more" [1]—this is in fine contrast with the principle once laid down by Mr Gladstone himself, that "men who have no belief in the divine revelation are not the men to govern this nation, be they Whigs or Radicals; and certainly such Liberalism affords a tolerable indication of that policy by which they would thus tear up by the roots all that is dear to us, and all that makes life valuable." [2]

Such, then, was the situation in Ireland, and such were the fruits of Mr Gladstone's policy, at the close of 1886. The smaller landowners had been nearly or wholly ruined, hundreds of lives had been sacrificed, the advance

[1] Rousseau, vol. i. p. 226. [2] Election Address, 1837.

of the country towards prosperity was completely checked, and the whole problem of the government of Ireland had so enormously increased in difficulty, that it had become, if it never was so before, almost hopeless in its character. The farmers and other tenants had gained nothing, for their debts had steadily been rolling up; and some day they must be paid, or the holders of farms will have to go. The only persons who are better off than they were are the leaders of the National League, and the demagogues who act as their emissaries. In various parts of Ireland, even if a man has honestly desired to pay his rent, he has not dared to pay it, or has lost his life. The following extracts from two letters—two out of hundreds that have been published—set forth, in homely and pathetic language, the results of the "healing measures" of the last eighteen years:[1]—

[*June* 10, 1886.]

"Honrd. Sir,—I don't know how to tell you the cruel murder of my poor decent Father. . . . When those

[1] These letters were given by the 'Times' special correspondent,—"Letters from Ireland," No. 7, October 15, 1886.

wretches came in they asked for him; he got out of bed and said, 'Men, what have I done.' One said, 'Come on your knees; did you not bring us this way before?' . . . One of them asked him outside the door, that he wanted a word with him; my mother and I bawled out that he would not. She ran between my poor Father and the moonlights; one of them put the gun to her breast; she said, 'Let me go for the holy water.' At the same time another moonlight had a gun pointed towards me, and told me get into the room. He said, 'Go once, go twice, go the third time;' then I ran, and he fired the shot. I can't tell you any more, but he died in my arms."

The second letter was written in September 1886. This, also, tells its own piteous tale:—

"Honrd. Sir,—This sorreful letter contains a sad tragedy concerning my murdered husband, who was waylaid and killed by —— son of —— heare in broad daylight not much more than one quarter of a mile from his sorreful home on Tuesday last I am sertin you have a full account of it from the publick papers the caus of his murder is this he had promised your Honer to pay rent in July there was a few pounds he had lent his brother previous to this and in order to keep his word with you he went to his brother's house for this money which he did receive and was found in his pocket after being murdered thease words you will find to be correct from the newspapers after the inqure which will taek place on next week. Now it is what I

want from your Honer's kind consideration taek in to account the afful trial God has showered uppon me and I will ask you for a little further indulgence as the most of the money the he had for the rent went to pay his funeral expence I do expect to be able to pay after a little time as there is nothing from this forward so much before me as to have my rent paid."

When the time comes to make up the final account of Mr Gladstone's services to his country, let not these eloquent tributes to his work in Ireland be forgotten.

VI.

FINANCIAL POLICY

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When it is alleged, as at times it still is, though less frequently than in former years, that Mr Gladstone is the greatest financier of this or any other age, every man is entitled to ask on what grounds the claim is supported? The same tests by which we endeavour to form an estimate of Mr Gladstone's services as a statesman, must be applied to his work as a financier. What has he done? What have been the general results of his policy? If it can be shown that his estimates, in most instances, proved to be utterly mistaken or erroneous, that his Budgets were remarkable chiefly for the number of glittering illusions which were scattered over them, and that he was invariably one of the most extravagant and imprudent of English

Ministers, it must be admitted that the nation has little cause for gratitude in reviewing his achievements as Chancellor of the Exchequer. Let us, then, appeal to the evidence of facts, by which Mr Gladstone, like commoner men, must submit to be judged.

It will be found, upon examination, that Mr Gladstone's expedients for raising revenue have been very simple, and in their way very effective: (1) to throw increasing burdens upon the landed interest; (2) to make the income-tax furnish the wherewithal for his surplus the following year. Both these expedients may be defended on various grounds. It must, however, be pointed out that they are not in the nature of brilliant discoveries. The first has always been advocated by the socialists, from St Simon to Henry George; but it cannot be said that its soundness has been proved in this country, where agriculture is a declining industry, and where the losses in land have been estimated to amount to £500,000,000 within the last few years. Sir James Caird has stated that he estimates "the total loss to the landed interest" — including landlords, tenants, and

labourers—"in spendable income for the last year (1885) at £42,800,000."[1] With regard to the income-tax, it requires no extraordinary genius to provide a surplus if the widest latitude is allowed for the free and unrestrained exercise of this despotic instrument. But we have to remember that no one has condemned the income-tax more unsparingly than Mr Gladstone. Twice at least he has promised to abolish it; and it almost follows from these statements that no one has had more frequent or more unjustifiable resort to it.

Mr Gladstone borrowed his method of finance from Sir Robert Peel, but the pupil surpassed the master in boldness and dexterity. The main theory underlying the system was this—if you take off taxes on articles used by the bulk of the people, they will not complain of an increase in the income-tax; those upon whom the special tax falls will be compelled to pay, and as they belong to the class which does not organise street processions or get up riots, the revenue will flow in, and the Government

[1] Evidence before the Royal Commission on Trade, Second Report, p. 296.

will have an easy existence. Sir Robert Peel, in 1842, followed this short and summary way of making a surplus. Mr Gladstone introduced into his first Budget, in 1853, an elaborate panegyric on the income-tax, which he intended to serve as his sheet-anchor. Sir Robert Peel promised that the tax should be merely temporary in its duration; Mr Gladstone followed in his steps. He invented nothing; he merely carried on an experiment which others had begun. But he applied it to conditions of trade and society which Sir Robert Peel never for a moment contemplated, and he pushed it to an extremity which the original designer would most certainly have condemned.[1] A fiscal weapon may be very good in the hands of the man who fashioned it, and for a certain time; but it does not follow that anybody and everybody will be able to make a wise use of it, for all ages to come.

Peel borrowed from Pitt, and Gladstone from Peel, but the inequality and the injustice of the

[1] The financial speeches of Sir Robert Peel, and many expressions in his 'Memoirs' and his letters (*vide* the 'Croker Papers'), contain overwhelming proof in support of this conclusion.

income-tax were not fully realised until Mr Gladstone determined to make it applicable to times of peace as well as of war. It added much to the difficulties and hardships which have pressed so severely of late years upon tradesmen, clerks, and the poorer classes of professional men. Not only are their slender means much reduced, but they are continually exposed to the inconvenience and annoyance of having to produce their books, and reveal the whole state of their affairs, before assessors who may be, and often are, their neighbours and rivals in business. Everything must be disclosed, even although the disclosure of falling profits and declining trade may sometimes inflict the utmost injury upon the man required to make it. The proceedings before assessors are, indeed, supposed to be private, but most people know or have heard of instances in which privacy was not maintained much longer than four-and-twenty hours. It is not uncommon for persons who deem it cheaper and better to submit to extortion rather than reveal their diminished prosperity, to pay on assessments higher than their real incomes. Mr Gladstone has always reasoned

and acted as if the tax fell exclusively upon the rich—upon those well able to bear it. But no one is much poorer than the man of small income who endeavours to bring up his family respectably, whose receipts are uncertain, and who has many claims upon his earnings or profits. To such a man the income-tax is a scorpion's whip, and Mr Gladstone has applied it without pity. There were formerly many light duties which no one felt, and which therefore could not be looked upon in the nature of a hardship. Mr Gladstone took immense credit to himself for sweeping them away; but he did not compensate for their loss by economy in the administration of government—on the contrary, his expenditure has always been on the most lavish scale. He simply increased the weight and pressure of taxation while going through the form of lightening it. "You shall not pay," he said in effect, "any tax on pepper or on artificial flowers; but I will put my hand in your pocket, and take out 6d., or it may be 1s., in the £ on all you earn." It is as Lord Carnarvon said in 1862—"Whereas formerly

there existed many sources of taxation, collected from many quarters, and affecting numerous classes, yet crushing none, and expanding with the growth and prosperity of the country, there was now substituted for this system one iron and despotic rule, which, in the very nature of things, must be unequal, and which was generally oppressive and unjust in its character."

This "mighty engine," as Mr Gladstone called it in 1853, has been set in action by him, without mercy, whenever he has found it necessary to replenish an exhausted exchequer, or to find the means for making a great show of reducing taxation. It enabled him to produce a surplus, and at the same time to dazzle all beholders by playing with a number of other and smaller taxes, much as a conjuror tosses balls in the air. People looked on at his performances with amazement. It became the fashion to go down to the House on a Budget night. Solid results of financial ability were not looked for — it was a grand display of rhetorical fireworks. The smallest detail furnished matter for at least half an hour. The greater part of an evening was occupied with

"marvellous effects" of oratory, which nobody stopped to analyse, and which nobody understood. "Syllables govern the world," said John Selden, and no one has ever placed more confidence in the apothegm than Mr Gladstone. Sometimes he kept back the business part of his Budget till the very last, and then it was found that it all might have been explained in five minutes. But it did not become an orator to deal with a matter of business in a business-like spirit. There must be a prodigious pouring out of words, a thrilling of the heart, a "benumbing" of the intellect. The public had gathered for a great spectacle, and they had to be gratified. In 1862, Lord Overstone, an eminently practical man,[1] in referring to Mr Gladstone's financial policy, remarked that "the subject had been enveloped with so much ingenious rhetoric, and such a blaze of delusive eloquence, that he did not believe the plain simple facts of the case were really understood by the public." He also told the country that

[1] It may be necessary to remind some readers that Lord Overstone was Mr Samuel Jones Lloyd, the well-known banker—a Liberal.

"he could not conceal his conviction—a conviction which was, he believed, shared by many persons of experience on the subject—that the management of the national finance during the last two years[1] had been of a very perilous character, and had led to results neither satisfactory nor safe."[2] But "experience," even in this practical country, seems to count for little against oratory. "Delusive eloquence" carried the day. Yet Lord Overstone's criticisms were thoroughly just at the time, and it may be doubted whether, from that day to this, the "simple facts" have been grasped by the people.

Mr Gladstone's first Budget was, as we have said, produced in 1853. It was a sort of fairy palace, all gilt and splendour—and disappointment. But it took England by storm, and its author enjoyed a great reputation for years by virtue of it. Let anybody examine it now in the light of experience, and it will at once be seen that there never was a mass of greater fallacies and blunders produced before

[1] During which Mr Gladstone had been Chancellor of the Exchequer.

[2] Speech in the House of Lords, May 30, 1862.

a civilised community. The chief and most original feature of the Budget was the succession-tax, from which Mr Gladstone bade the world to expect the most startling results. What it was to do was thus described by himself:[1]—

"I have no objection, as far as I am able, to state the results of my investigation as to future years, and I think I do not exaggerate when I say that this tax, if it is adopted by the Committee, while it will add £500,000 to the income of the present year 1853-54, will add a further increase of £700,000 to the year 1854-55, £400,000 more to the year 1855-56, and £400,000 more to the year 1856-57, making a total addition to the permanent taxation of the country of not less than £2,000,000 per annum. And this, I must remind the Committee, is a tax which will leave wholly untouched the intelligence and skill of the country. It is a tax that gives the relief, and more than the relief, that you aim at by the reconstruction of the income-tax, but does it without the danger which would necessarily attend that reconstruction."

Two millions a-year were thus to be added to the permanent resources of the country. In the true spirit of a dreamer he began at once to dispose of this money. The income-tax was to

[1] In introducing the Budget, April 18, 1853.

be gradually lowered, and in 1860 it was to cease altogether. It could not, he said, be retained "as a portion of the permanent and ordinary finance of the country." It might be called into requisition "when the hand of violence is let loose, and when whole plains are besmeared with carnage"—in plain English, in time of war. But, he said, "my own opinion is decidedly against the perpetuity of the tax as a permanent ordinary portion of our finances." He summed the matter up as follows:—

"Our proposition, then, so far as it merely regards the income-tax, is this. We propose to renew it for two years from April 1853, at the rate of 7d. in the pound. The Committee will recollect that I said we thought it our duty to look the whole breadth of this difficulty in the face: not to endeavour to escape it, not to endeavour to attenuate or to understate it, but to face and to settle, if the Committee would enable us, the whole question of the income-tax. We propose, then, to re-enact it for two years, from April 1853 to April 1855, at the rate of 7d. in the pound. From April 1855, to enact it for two more years at 6d. in the pound; and then for three years more—I cannot wonder at the smile which I perceive that my words provoke—for three more years, from April 1857, at 5d. Under this proposal, on the 5th of April 1860 the income-tax will by law expire."

Then there was another "large proposal" to reduce the interest on the National Debt, by an operation which sounded plausible enough at the moment, but which utterly broke down. Concerning that, Mr Disraeli made the following remarks in February 1860. Their accuracy was then, and is now, entirely undisputed.

"I may say, in passing, what is perhaps not known to the House, that that part of the scheme of 1853 cost us the whole of the balance in the Exchequer, and when we entered on the Russian war, our balance in the Treasury was little more than £1,000,000."

So vanished one part of the cloud-castle of the modern Alnaschar. The other part fared no better. The income-tax was continually increased. In 1859, Mr Gladstone made an addition to it of 4d. in the £, and in the great millennial year of 1860, when it was to cease altogether, it stood at 10d. There had been the Crimean war since the promise of total remission was made, but Mr Gladstone ought to have foreseen that war when he produced his chimerical Budget of 1853. It could very easily have been foreseen. Mr Gladstone and his

colleagues might, as Mr Disraeli showed in 1860,[1] have prevented the Russian war if they had displayed due foresight and firmness. The utopian scheme of 1853 was brought forward in the teeth of all the signs and warnings of the hour, which pointed to war. It was a wild freak of the imagination throughout. Let Mr Gladstone's own words explain how his anticipations from the succession duty had turned out: "At the present moment, for the year 1860-61, we stand worse than we reckoned in 1853 by £1,000,000, on account of the shortcoming in the receipt from the succession duty."[2] There was not an important detail of the Budget which did not prove to be based upon the fiscal principles of Micawber. Yet, so strong is the faith of Mr Gladstone's followers in his financial genius, that Mr Spencer Walpole actually goes into raptures over this very Budget of 1853.[3] "A Budget of this comprehensive character," he says, "had rarely been brought forward by any financier. It emphasised in a striking manner

[1] Speech in the House of Commons, February 24, 1860.
[2] Speech in the House of Commons, February 10, 1860.
[3] History of England, vol. v. pp. 66, 67.

the superiority of Mr Gladstone to Mr Disraeli." On the very next page the panegyrist is compelled to record the fact that Mr Gladstone's proposals "from one point of view"—that is, the practical point of view—"were singularly unfortunate." The Budget broke down everywhere; *but*, says the Radical writer, "in breadth, in comprehension, in boldness, in knowledge, and in originality, it may be compared with Peel's greatest efforts." All this is deliberately said of a gigantic and deplorable failure. It is an example of the manner in which Mr Gladstone, whether right or wrong, has been covered with unceasing adulation by the horde of eulogists who have incessantly burnt their incense before him. Mr Gladstone must sometimes have used in secret, as he contemplated his worshippers, the contemptuous words of Hamlet: "They fool me to the top of my bent."

One test of a sound financier, in any country, is usually held to be the accuracy of his estimates. How does Mr Gladstone stand that test? Volumes might be written on the subject, but the essential facts may be compressed into a small compass.

For the year 1860-61, he estimated the *income* at £72,308,000. It turned out to amount to no more than £70,283,000—a mistake of £2,025,000. The *expenditure* for the same year he estimated at £70,100,000. It actually reached the sum of £72,842,000—a miscalculation of £2,742,000. He had thus committed the two errors which are most inexcusable in a financial Minister—he had greatly overrated the income, and greatly underrated the expenditure. These would be adjudged serious faults in any other man; in Mr Gladstone, we are bidden to regard them as proofs of a genius too sublime for ordinary comprehension.

In 1861-62, he estimated the *income* at £70,283,000. It proved to be only £69,674,000 — an error of £609,000. He estimated the *expenditure* at £69,875,000. It proved to be £70,837,000 — a mistake of £962,000.[1] Again there was great inaccuracy in both directions, but it did not reduce the

[1] These figures are given from a careful statement made by the Earl of Carnarvon in the House of Lords, May 30, 1862. —Hansard, vol. clxvii., 3d series, pp. 131-142.

public confidence in Mr Gladstone's prudence and foresight. These two years had shown a total deficit of £4,000,000 — a result which any other Minister might have found it difficult to reconcile with the theory that he possessed almost superhuman wisdom in matters of finance.

The famous French Treaty, which was to regenerate the commerce of England and France, and render France a Free Trade nation, landed us in a deficiency of £2,558,000, which had to be made up principally by direct taxation. The repeal of the paper duty, the credit for which ought to have been largely ascribed by Mr Gladstone to Mr Milner Gibson, produced another deficiency of £1,164,000. We need not enter into a consideration of the merits of either of these measures; but why were they not carried out without causing general confusion in the finances, and creating deficits which the unfortunate income-tax payers were called upon to make good? In one instance, five quarters' tax was crowded into four quarters of the year — a development of *la haute finance* which seemed to the unfortunate

sufferers to savour less of genius than of sharp practice.

Let us now consider what the great authority before cited, Lord Overstone, had to say upon all this :[1]—

"It was difficult to state any possible form of objectionable financial procedure to which we had not resorted. We had converted capital into income, we had seriously diminished our balances in the Exchequer, we had added to our debt, and we had repealed taxes without a surplus revenue. Year by year, and quarter by quarter, official acknowledgments of the excess of our expenditure over income were published, and we were now presenting to Parliament and the country financial arrangements for the coming year, of which he had never yet found a man of common-sense who would venture to pronounce that they were sufficient for the purpose, or that the asserted surplus had any reality. We had converted capital into income by anticipating the payment of a large amount of taxes. Our next step had been to repudiate the payment of our Exchequer bonds, although, when those bonds were issued, it was promised that they should be repaid on the return of peace, and that every effort should be made to pay off in the first years of peace the burdens incurred in time of war. Although he thought it was very inexpedient to enter into any such engagement, and had never

[1] Speech in the House of Lords, May 30, 1862.—Hansard, vol. clxvii. p. 154.

approved of the policy of issuing those Exchequer bonds, yet, as it had been solemnly entered into, it became necessary, for the credit of the country, that it should be firmly carried out. But not only had that not been done, but, notwithstanding various illegitimate devices to support the balance of revenue against charges to which he had alluded, those bonds had been renewed instead of having been discharged and cancelled. What had been the result? They lie in the hands of the Bank of England, not negotiable with the public; and thus in reality constitute but another form of borrowing money from the Bank."

The criticisms made by Mr Disraeli, which remain to this hour unshaken, must also be carefully pondered:[1]—

"In addition to this deficit of £4,000,000, the right honourable gentleman, during these two years, has anticipated the resources of the country to the extent of £3,500,000—something more than £1,200,000 upon the malt credit, and £2,000,000 anticipated upon the income-tax. Well, sir, with one-half of the Spanish payment—for only one-half of that payment has been enjoyed by the right honourable gentleman during those two years—the House will perceive that those sums made up the amount of £3,500,000. Therefore this great minister of our finances has in the course of two years expended more than the ordinary revenue of the country gave

[1] Speech in the House of Commons, April 7, 1862.

him—indeed, has exceeded the ordinary revenue of the country by no less than £7,500,000. But is that all? What was the ordinary revenue of the country during those two years when its amount was exceeded by the right honourable gentleman by the enormous sum of £7,500,000? It was an ordinary revenue sustained and supported by war taxation—by a war income-tax, by war duties upon tea and upon sugar. And yet, swollen and bloated as the ordinary revenue of the country was by these war taxes, it was exceeded by the right honourable gentleman during those two years by the sum of £7,500,000. But is that all? It seems impossible that there can be any aggravation of such aggravated circumstances. And yet, I can show the House that hitherto they have not measured the amount of the prodigality of the right honourable gentleman; for not only has he exceeded during two years the ordinary revenue of the country by £7,500,000, that revenue being sustained by war taxation, but he has done this at a period when the charges for the National Debt had diminished to the extent of £2,000,000 by the lapse of terminable annuities."

These comments were little regarded at the time; they may find a more attentive audience now, when the tinsel of Mr Gladstone's Budgets is wearing off, and the nation is beginning to look with apprehension on the results of having its finances modelled on the ideas of an Arabian Night's dream. It is even conceivable that the

day is rapidly approaching when solid business qualities, foresight, and good judgment may be more valued in an English Chancellor of the Exchequer than the power of making a speech three hours in length.

Mr Gladstone's previous achievements were all outdone in later years. In addressing his constituents on the eve of the general election of 1874, he once more held out the tempting bait of the abolition of the income-tax. "I do not hesitate to affirm," he said, "that an effort should now be made to attain this advantage, nor to declare that, according to my judgment, *it is in present circumstances practicable.*" The bribe was rejected, and the moment Mr Gladstone returned to office, in 1880, he punished those who rejected it by increasing the income-tax to 6d. in the £—a special fine of 1d. in the £. He had again given a tangible proof of the justice of his own description of the income-tax in 1857:[1] "It is and must be an inquisitorial tax; it is, upon a scale far exceeding that of all the other taxes put together, a demoralising tax. . . . Lastly, being

[1] Quarterly Review, vol. ci. p. 282.

loaded with this odium, it must always be a dangerous tax, and it is clearly the one among our imposts through which revolutionary or even democratic finance may most readily carve a road to the confiscation of property." Writing in 1857, *after* the Crimean war, Mr Gladstone—not then foreseeing that he would soon be filling the post of Chancellor of the Exchequer in a Liberal Administration—still maintained that the income-tax could and should be abolished in 1860. "We will not for a moment," he wrote, "permit ourselves to doubt that Lord Aberdeen and his political friends, who chiefly reaped the credit, whatever it may have been, of the Acts of 1853, will consistently adhere to the pledges they then gave." He dwelt upon the solemn pledges of the Government, and protested [1] that "to break an engagement of such deliberation and such solemnity would be a fresh blow to the confidence of the people in their representative institutions, a fresh pretext and a fresh incentive to dangerous innovations." Three years afterwards, his was the hand which deliberately broke the engagement.

[1] Quarterly Review, vol. ci. p. 283.

In 1880, besides adding to the income-tax, he abolished the malt-duty, and announced a reduction in the wine-duties, to take effect not later than the 15th of August. The farmers cared little about the malt-tax, but many of them, at a time when their means were greatly restricted, groaned heavily under the extra pressure of the income-tax. Moreover, on the 24th of June, Mr Gladstone was obliged to announce to the House of Commons that he did not see his way to conclude the arrangement with France by the time he had named, and it then appeared that he had devised his scheme without a direct understanding with the Power on whom its success partly depended. But the solid part of the Budget—the additional penny on the income-tax—remained. Then the usual course of extravagant expenditure, against which Mr Gladstone has always protested in theory, and "for others," was pursued unchecked. All thoughts of "retrenchment" were flung to the winds; the income-tax collectors were incited to give an extra turn to the thumb-screw with which they are provided; vast sums were thrown away on war or preparation for war. The national

expenditure mounted up higher and higher. In December 1882, Mr Gladstone transferred the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer to Mr Childers, but the ruling spirit of the Ministerial financial policy was unchanged. The same disproportion was maintained between estimated and actual expenditure, until, in Mr Gladstone's last year of office, 1885, he earned the distinction of sanctioning the most enormous Budget ever seen since 1814. His financial genius at last shone forth in all its splendour, and the nation looked on stupefied at the new reading which Mr Gladstone had given to the old motto, "Peace, Retrenchment, and Reform." His last and crowning achievement as a financier is never likely to be forgotten :—

Estimated Expenditure, . .	£88,972,000
Vote of Credit, ...	11,000,000
	£99,972,000

—or within a trifle of £100,000,000. The *ordinary* estimated expenditure of this year "exceeded by nearly £400,000 the total expenditure of the costliest year of the Crimean war." There was a deficit of £15,000,000,

which Mr Childers—who has never been suspected of possessing financial genius—was instructed to propose should be made up by an increase of 2d. in the income-tax, a tax of 5 per cent on corporate property, an increase in the legacy and succession duty, and in the duties on spirits and beer, and a suspension of the Sinking Fund. Every principle was violated which Mr Gladstone had formerly declared inviolable. All his theories of "sound finance" went overboard. Such was his crowning exploit, and upon this £100,000,000 Budget he may safely rest his financial fame.

In 1884, there were five separate series of army supplementary estimates, four separate series of naval estimates, three of civil service estimates. The humble taxpayer, without genius, might be forgiven if he failed to see supernatural ability in arrangements which produced these results. In the five years from 1880 to 1885, there had been £12,000,000 demanded for supplementary estimates, not reckoning the vote of credit of £11,000,000.[1]

[1] The facts were brought out in an able speech by Lord George Hamilton in the House of Commons, June 8, 1885.

In 1863, Mr Gladstone proposed to tax hospitals and other charitable endowments. There were loud remonstrances from all parts of the country, and a deputation larger than had ever before waited upon a Chancellor of the Exchequer went to expostulate with him.[1] He was very angry, and very "eloquent," and scolded everybody without mercy. "It is too much to say," he exclaimed—as if somebody had really said anything of the sort—"that hospitals are managed by angels and archangels, and do not, like the rest of humanity, stand in need of supervision, criticism, and rebuke." He fought vigorously against a straw man of his own making,—but all the same, he had to give way, always a cruel blow to his pride. He has constantly manifested a restless desire to turn the income-tax assessor and collector into hospitals, infirmaries, and other institutions of the kind. Charity should be taxed, since charity is the outcome of wealth. This is his favourite idea, but the storm of indignation which burst upon him in 1863 compelled him to abandon it. Raise money how and

[1] May 4, 1863.

where you can, so long as you pay your way as you go. This has been another of Mr Gladstone's theories to which he has been true only when out of office. Lord Palmerston expended large sums on fortifications, and borrowed money for the purpose, all with Mr Gladstone's concurrence. In 1872, Mr Gladstone himself raised £3,500,000 for "localisation of the forces"—that is, for building barracks—and he spread the payments over a series of years extending to 1885. In the Budget of 1885, he caused Mr Childers to propose a suspension of the Sinking Fund to the amount of £4,600,000, thus stopping the gradual payment of the debt—another obligation of "honour and duty" which he has declared to be binding upon us. It is right to pay off the debt, or right not to pay it, just as he happens to be out of office or in it. Economy of administration is a great and peremptory necessity of the day, but Mr Gladstone wrung £41,000,000 more from the taxpayers during his six years of office (1880-85) than Lord Beaconsfield's Administration asked for during the same time. He spent £18,000,000 more

upon "bloated armaments" than his predecessors. His Civil List and Civil Services charges amounted to £20,000,000 more. He combined, throughout these six years, the highest possible rate of expenditure with the greatest possible inefficiency.

As Mr Disraeli most justly said in 1862, "while the right hon. gentleman is without exception the most profuse Minister that ever administered the affairs of this country in peace, he is perpetually insinuating, to use the mildest term, that he disapproves of that expenditure, and is burning to denounce it." But though Mr Gladstone's Budgets were extravagant and his calculations delusive, there was always something in them to catch popular applause. The income-tax might be increased, but the duty on pepper was abolished. And in dealing with these trifles, Mr Gladstone clothed his ideas in sonorous language, which so impressed his hearers at the time that they lost sight of the jugglery which was being practised. They stood gazing at the wizard from whose mouth a Niagara of words poured out, and they felt that it would be presumptu-

ous to inquire into his statements. The Budget might be a tissue of romance, but then there was the oratory—surely a practical nation might assess that at a considerable value. Sometimes there was a new and startling theory unfolded, as in 1866, when Mr Gladstone disclosed the terrible fact that our supply of coal would be exhausted by "1970, 104 years from this time." Sometimes it was the "grand eloquence" of the Minister which transfixed the country. There was, for instance, his oration on pepper:[1]—

"We propose to reduce the duty on pepper. The fate of pepper might well excite the commiseration of any humane man. . . . The present appears to be a good occasion when, without exciting feelings of jealousy in the agriculturist or any other class of the community, we can afford to do justice to pepper. The case is a hard one, and for this reason: all the spices and condiments in which the wealthier classes have an exclusive interest have been long ago set free from duty. But pepper is a condiment common to all classes of the community; and though I cannot say whether this is so or not, *I am told that it is largely consumed in Ireland.*"

This is interesting, not only as an example of the dignity and importance which a great man

[1] Budget of 1866.—Hansard, vol. clxxxiii. (3d ser.), pp. 382, 383.

can throw around the smallest of subjects, but as containing the first indication on record of Mr Gladstone's overpowering interest in Irish affairs. He had been told, but could not say of his own knowledge, that pepper was largely consumed in Ireland. Some future eulogist of Mr Gladstone may trace the germ of all Mr Gladstone's Irish measures to this discovery. Another example of the rare and beautiful gems with which he adorned his Budgets may be taken from his statement of April 3, 1862:—

"There were taxes on every fresh value added to it by the industry of man; now there are no taxes on the fresh value added to it in any branch of production by the industry of man. There were taxes on the sauce which pampers man's appetite; now there is no tax on sauce, and man may pamper his appetite as he pleases. There were taxes on the drug that restored him to health; now there is no tax on drugs, and he may get well as quickly as he can. There were taxes on the ermine which decorates the judge; now that ermine is free. There were taxes on the rope which hangs the criminal; now that rope is free. There were taxes on the poor man's salt; now that salt is free. There were taxes on the rich man's spice; now that spice is free. There were taxes on the brass nails of the coffin; now those brass nails are free. There were taxes on the ribbons of the bride—

and let her wind up the procession—her ribbons also now are free."

Whether it is of great moment to the nation that the ermine of the judge should be free, and that the rope which hangs the criminal should be untaxed, and whether these advantages, and such as these, are not dearly bought by the infliction of a gigantic burden of taxation, such as no nation has ever borne before in times of peace—all this will be rigorously inquired into before many more years have passed. It may then be decided that flights of eloquence, however magnificent, do not entirely compensate a people for having a whole army of assessors and tax-collectors let loose upon their warehouses, shops, and homes, or for the innumerable other evils arising from visionary estimates, deceptive calculations, and Budgets compounded of "such stuff as dreams are made of."

VII.

CHARACTERISTICS

VII.

CHARACTERISTICS.

WHAT are commonly called the "characteristics" of a public man are always observed with interest by the people, who have a natural wish to see how the chief performers look and act when they are off the stage. English statesmen, down to the time of Mr Gladstone, have never been unduly solicitous to satisfy this form of curiosity. Most of them were rejoiced to withdraw, as soon as their duties were discharged, into the privacy of home. They were not accustomed, in those comparatively primitive times, to regard themselves as part of an exhibition which was always open to the sight-seer. Sir Robert Peel held much aloof even from his personal friends; and although Lord Palmerston was a man of sociable

disposition, the "interviewer" was by no means invited to live in his house. Very few persons were able to boast of thorough intimacy with Lord Beaconsfield at any time of his life. Mr Gladstone will leave a very different example for the benefit of posterity. Publicity is to him as the breath of life. Even his pleasures and recreations appear to become tedious and insipid unless he can indulge in them before a multitude of gazers. When he goes into his library, somebody follows to see what are the books he has condescended to read.[1] There must be a public ceremonial whenever he takes up his devastating axe, that sinister emblem of his character and life. This peculiar disposition is manifested even in affairs of the highest moment. There is a memorable passage which speaks of those who "love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men."

[1] Thus, in December 1886, Professor Stuart informed a public meeting that Mr Gladstone was in "splendid vigour," and that "this excellent condition is partly ascribed to the fact that he is now able to spend three hours every day in the study of Homer; and this change from that stormy round of political controversies, acting as a recreation to the mind, has also largely improved the condition of his *physique*."

Mr Gladstone is not one of the class to which the warning applies; but he realises with almost painful vividness that he lives in an advertising age. It cannot be without his consent that there appear continually in the papers announcements with which the public have been for years familiar, to the effect that Mr Gladstone went to "early morning communion," that he "read the lessons" in a clear (or husky) voice, and that he made a point of walking to the church through the snow or rain. Nor can it be without his knowledge that gaping crowds are drawn from neighbouring towns to see and hear him perform his self-allotted task. He once complained that Lord Palmerston had fascinated a certain class of men who were "so governed by religious partisanship as to make it the rule of political action in general," and another class of men "of marked constitutional timidity."[1] This accusation against Lord Palmerston partakes of the grotesque, but much might be said in its support if it were applied to the accuser himself, even though it be true that his chief colleagues in his last Ministry

[1] Quarterly Review, April 1857, p. 548.

were much more remarkable for "constitutional timidity" than for "religious partisanship."

There have been several periods in Mr Gladstone's career when his popularity manifestly declined, and it will be found that at these critical moments a conjunction of two phenomena occurred—a formal and pathetic retirement from public life, and a series of tree-felling exhibitions. Both have usually produced their effect. In 1874, after his great defeat at the general elections, he bade adieu to the world. It was advertised far and wide as his last farewell. His party were in a great minority, the duty of leading it must necessarily prove very severe and disheartening, and Mr Gladstone left the thankless work to be done by Lord Hartington. If it were done successfully, or if the veering wind of popularity set once more in the direction of the Liberals, Mr Gladstone could, at a moment's notice, spring to the front and claim the chief prize. There could be no danger in leaving others to bear the heat and burden of the day. Consequently, in January 1875, Mr Gladstone confirmed his abdication by a second letter to Lord Granville,

in which he said: "I see no public advantage in my continuing to act as the leader of the Liberal party. . . . At the age of sixty-five, and after forty-two years of a laborious public life, I think myself entitled to retire on the present opportunity. This retirement is dictated to me by my personal views as to the best means of spending the closing years of my life." After a time the wheel of fortune made another revolution, and Mr Gladstone stepped forward to take the front place—it should rather be said the two front places, for Mr Gladstone made himself Chancellor of the Exchequer as well as Prime Minister. To be at the head of a Ministry is a very different thing from being at the head of a dispirited Opposition. "He who in the parliamentary field," remarked Mr Disraeli, in a striking passage, "watches over the fortunes of routed troops, must be prepared to sit often alone."[1] This is a variety of loneliness which has never been congenial to Mr Gladstone's temperament.

The extraordinary spectacles of public tree-felling, which have so often moved Europe to

[1] Life of Lord George Bentinck, p. 10.

mirth and astonishment, were frequently repeated during the time Lord Hartington was leading the "routed troops." On a certain occasion Mr Gladstone felt constrained to censure these ludicrous exhibitions, while he continued to carry them on. This was one of those subtle compromises between self-interest and conscience which impart so much delight to Mr Gladstone, and which would have equally delighted Ignatius Loyola. "The proceeding," he wrote, in his elaborate manner, "assumes the aspect of an exhibition of domestic life to the world at large, such as does not, and, I am compelled to admit, ought not, to meet with general approval." About the same time there appeared in the shop-windows a photograph of Mr Gladstone clad in his sylvan attire, consisting of a shirt and trousers. He was seated upon a fallen tree, axe in hand, and it was evident that some photographer had come upon him by mere accident in the midst of his Jaques-like meditations in the forest.

These contrivances had their effect upon the public mind, and Mr Gladstone, not altogether unconscious of their success, was seen abroad

more than ever in company with his axe. In December 1878, a grocer of Clay Cross wrote to challenge him to cut down a tree, for a sovereign, with a "timber-feller named Hopkinson." Mr Gladstone sent a reply (December 12, 1878), in which he said he regarded the challenge as "a great compliment," but "age and other causes" compelled him to decline it. The meaning of the letter was clear to all: "I am one of yourselves; we have had enough of proud Ministers; there is no pride in me, at least when I am out of office. Here I am, cheap and accessible to all—your own flesh and blood." Nevertheless, the working men of England like, even more than "condescension," to see their public men maintain a becoming attitude of self-respect and dignity.

But all this time the trees continued to fall like leaves in autumn. It would be too much to say that the excursionists who thronged to Hawarden were treated with refreshments, but chips were sometimes served round by Mr Herbert Gladstone. It was a diet calculated at least to promote reflection, and Lord Randolph Churchill happily expressed what was in many

minds at the time, in a brilliant speech at Blackpool.[1] Mr Gladstone's whole policy was typified in these chips. "Chips to the faithful allies in Afghanistan, chips to the trusting native races of South Africa, chips to the Egyptian fellah, chips to the British farmer, chips to the manufacturer and the artisan, chips to the agricultural labourer, chips to the House of Commons itself." After this there was no further distribution of chips in Hawarden Park.

The calumnies upon Lord Beaconsfield, the appeals to sentimentalists, the bids for the Irish vote, the promises of economy and perpetual peace, combined to restore Mr Gladstone to power in 1880. Not a year had passed before everybody could see that he was steering his craft on to the rocks again. He saw it himself, for he began thus early to talk of retirement. He intimated that "repose of mind and *reflection on other matters*"—an allusion which could not fail to produce its effect on a serious people—"are more appropriate to the latest stage of our human existence."[2] He seemed—for he spoke in

[1] January 24, 1884.

[2] Speech at Leeds, October 7, 1881.

riddles—to nominate as his successor Lord Hartington, "who in the struggles in the House of Commons has earned the confidence of the country,"—a confidence which he has never lost, although Mr Gladstone no longer regards him with the same eyes. High-minded men, actuated by lofty motives, and inspired with independent opinions, which they will not sacrifice even to turn a minority into a majority—men such as these have never been favourites with Mr Gladstone. They became inexpressibly repugnant to him towards the last. He preferred to surround himself with colleagues of the stamp referred to by the usurper in the "Tempest":—

> "They'll take suggestion as a cat laps milk;
> They'll tell the clock to any business that
> We say befits the hour."

The retirement did not take place; Mr Gladstone never retires, except when there is nothing to retire from. He pursued his way till 1885, with results which must sometimes have bitterly reminded his followers of his own words to Lord Granville: "I see no public advantage in my continuing to act as the leader of the Liberal party." At length, in 1885,

after his fall, the old conjunction reappeared in the political firmament. Mr Gladstone wished for repose. He desired time to reflect on "other matters." Then the tree-felling was resumed, and it was kept up till an unusually late period of the season:—

"In spite of a downpour of rain yesterday afternoon, Mr Gladstone completed the task of felling a large beech-tree in front of the castle. The diameter of the tree was three feet. Lady Stepney, Mr Scott Bankes, Mr W. H. Gladstone, Mr Herbert Gladstone, and a large party were present."[1]

Thus, in the course of a few months, he had again shown his "versatility" by applying his axe to a Constitution or to a tree with equal facility and indifference.

These peculiarities, though tinged with burlesque, are not extraneous to Mr Gladstone's public life. They have been intended to play an important and a definite part in the drama. In like manner, his apparently inexplicable mania for scattering post-cards all over the country, in reply to the most frivolous questions, answers a well-considered purpose. No

[1] The Times, November 5, 1886.

means, however slight in appearance, which can contribute to popularity, can safely be neglected. In pursuance of this principle, the world has at times been astonished to find in all the public journals a letter from Mr Gladstone on ox-tail soup, or on egg-flip, or on a music-hall song. The following—to quote but a single specimen — appeared in September 1878: "When I have had very lengthened statements to make, I have used what is called egg-flip—a glass of sherry beaten up with an egg. I think it excellent, but I have much more faith in the egg than in the alcohol. I never think of employing it unless on the rare occasions when I have expected to go much beyond an hour." When the fleet was ordered to the Dardanelles in February 1878 — the Russians being then on the march to Constantinople — some eccentric persons in Scotland wrote to Mr Gladstone to the effect that this removal of our ships exposed the "whole colonies of Great Britain" to "attack and pillage," that Hong-Kong and Australia were in jeopardy, and that "London will be a fine city to sack, and the safety of her Majesty and

royal family endangered." To this delirious rigmarole Mr Gladstone sent the following reply:—

"DEAR SIR,—I shall present your petition with pleasure, and I accept it as fresh proof, added to very many already received, of the sound feeling of Scotland upon the great political and constitutional questions now opened in connection with the condition of the east of Europe.—Your very faithful and obedient,

"W. E. GLADSTONE."

No opportunity, great or small, was ever missed of instilling into the minds of the electors the idea that Lord Beaconsfield was bent upon overthrowing the liberties of the people, as well as upon plunging his country into war. The charge was never put into so many words, for Mr Gladstone does not use plain words when cunning phrases will convey his meaning without involving him in responsibility. But in every speech, letter, or article which Mr Gladstone put forth between 1877 and 1880, Lord Beaconsfield was represented as a man determined to provoke Russia to war. In this species of misrepresentation, going at times to the extent of attributing to opponents

language which they had not employed, Mr Gladstone stands alone among English public men. Thus, during the agitation which he stirred up against the House of Lords in July 1884, in reference to the County Franchise Bill, he sought to create a bitter prejudice against Lord Salisbury by asserting that the "*leader of the Opposition in the House of Lords said* he could not discuss redistribution *with a rope round his neck.*" Upon this text, entirely of his own invention, Mr Gladstone worked himself into a fever of platform indignation. "A rope round his neck," he cried—"what is this rope round his neck? It is the prospect of a large addition to the franchise. . . . They speak as if these persons to be enfranchised were a set of wild beasts, and as if it were thought we could never have safety until they were all brought within their cages." A more inflammatory harangue could not have been delivered by the pinchbeck Dantons of Trafalgar Square. The labourers and workmen of England were looked upon by the Tories as "wild beasts," —that was intended, as Lord Cairns said at the time, to be the "key-note of the agitation."

The effort to stir up popular passion at such a moment was, in any case, indefensible; but it was proved beyond the shadow of a doubt that Lord Salisbury had never used the words in question. Lord Salisbury himself denounced them in the House of Lords[1] as "an utter fabrication," and Mr Gladstone, pressed on all sides for an explanation, owned[2] that he had not "the slightest reason to believe that Lord Salisbury had used those words." The report was "verbally accurate," but not, he "thought," in that particular place. "What is there in that phrase," he asked, referring to the phrase which he had twisted into an attack on the working men as wild beasts, "of which any man need be ashamed?" Convicted of having fathered it upon an adversary, he suddenly found it to be entirely innocent. When a damaging insinuation or a bold perversion of language has done its work, Mr Gladstone has always found it effective to withdraw by some side door which he has left conveniently ajar.

In this art of using language so that it may

[1] July 11, 1884.
[2] House of Commons, July 11.

be susceptible of two opposite interpretations, or may mean nothing whatever, Mr Gladstone is the greatest master that ever lived. Whether it is an art worth cultivating by a public man who desires to deal honestly with the people, and who has no deep-laid purpose or crafty motive to conceal, need not now be discussed. What is certain is that it has been extremely useful to Mr Gladstone, by enabling him to escape from pledges, guarantees, and specific undertakings innumerable. The Kilmainham Treaty was doing him great mischief until he explained that it was not a Treaty, and that Mr Parnell and his companions had "been liberated without any negotiation, promise, or engagement whatever." And again he said, "There never was the slightest understanding of any kind between her Majesty's Government and the hon. member for the city of Cork. The hon. member for the city of Cork has asked nothing and got nothing from us, and we, on our side, asked nothing and got nothing from him." Yet it was proved to the House of Commons and the country[1] that Mr O'Shea

[1] May 15, 1882.

was employed as the negotiator between the Government and the Kilmainham prisoners; and a letter was read from Mr Parnell to this go-between, in which the Irish leader undertook, on the production of an Arrears Bill, to "co-operate cordially for the future with the Liberal party," while Mr Sheridan was to be used to discourage outrages instead of planning them. All this was well known to Mr Gladstone; for while the negotiation was going on, O'Shea reported at each stage to Mr Forster, and Mr Forster stated to the House, "I took a memorandum at the time, *and I sent it to the Prime Minister*, and circulated it among my colleagues."[1] The Arrears Bill was actually brought in, and the prisoners were liberated. Mr Forster resigned, because he would not be a party, as he declared, to "paying black-mail to the law-breakers." Mr Gladstone contented himself—Mr Forster's memorandum being still in his desk—with asserting that there "never was the slightest understanding of any kind" with Mr Parnell. But there was an Irish party outside the Parnellites who believed that

[1] Mr Forster in the House of Commons, May 15, 1882.

Mr Gladstone and the "patriots" had entered into an alliance, and that belief, as subsequent revelations showed, led almost immediately to the assassination of Lord F. Cavendish and Mr Burke. The "Invincibles" were determined to have it understood that bargains between Mr Gladstone and Mr Parnell would not take all danger out of the Irish agitation. The first effect of the Kilmainham Treaty, after the release of the prisoners, was that Mr Parnell himself had to go into hiding, while Mr Gladstone and his colleagues were vigilantly guarded day and night.

Mr Gladstone has generally been satisfied to produce the particular result he desired by the dexterous use of a sophism, or by a plausible sentence which might be construed to signify one thing to-day and a totally different thing to-morrow. On the 13th of March 1885, he boldly assured the House of Commons that "her Majesty's Government and the Russian Government had arrived *at an agreement* that the Russian troops should not advance" towards Penjdeh. The troops did advance, and Mr Gladstone found it necessary to explain that the

Russian promise was given on the 18th of February, and that then it was only conditional. This was the sort of casuistry which enabled him for a long time to deny that we were at war in Egypt, and to assert that we were only carrying on certain "military operations." In the same way, Sir Peter Lumsden had not been recalled; he was only ordered "to repair to London." So on another occasion he spoke of the army of 10,000 men, with Armstrong guns, which had been sent to China, as "bearing *peaceful remonstrances* to the mouth of the Peiho;" and again he declared that we were slaying Arabs in Egypt "from a love of peace, and I may say on the principles of peace."[1] He denied energetically that General Gordon was surrounded at Khartoum—there were merely "bodies of hostile troops in the neighbourhood, forming more or less of a chain around it." When the Jews were being persecuted and killed in Russia, Mr Gladstone requested a correspondent to note that these were "cruelties resulting from fanatical ignorance; whereas the Bulgarian horrors arose out of Government by

[1] Speech at Penmaenmawr, October 4, 1882.

Massacre." This habit of word-fencing became so inveterate, that it was often used when it was quite superfluous. It seemed to be impossible for Mr Gladstone to speak straight out. In addressing a meeting at Hawarden in January 1884, he remarked: "It is in everybody's power to rear poultry, and, *if I may say so*, from eggs." It would not have occurred to any other man to qualify the statement that poultry comes from eggs.

In addition to this device, Mr Gladstone has found it essential to clothe his thoughts in a mystical kind of jargon, which may safely be left to the ordinary intellect to unravel or comprehend if it can. As a general rule, his sentences are of great length, extremely involved, containing parenthesis within parenthesis, shuffled together with modifications, conditions, and explanations, and piled up mountains high, until the mind which attempts to follow it all begins to wander. Out of the whole mass of his speeches and his writings gigantic as it is, not half a dozen—not three—passages can be quoted which are likely to become classical in the language, or even to

linger in the recollection. One, and only one, such passage has ever yet been cited as a masterpiece even by his most extravagant eulogist —that in which he boasted that the "banner which we now carry in the fight, though perhaps at some moment of the struggle it may droop over our sinking heads, yet will float again in the eye of heaven."[1] But more than half the credit for this thought, and even for the turn of expression, is due to Lord Byron:—

> "Yet, Freedom! yet thy banner, torn, but flying,
> Streams like the thunderstorm against the wind.
> Thy trumpet voice, though broken now and dying,
> The loudest still the tempest leaves behind.[2]

It may indeed be alleged that it is not likely Mr Gladstone knew of this passage, since he reads little poetry or verse—a conjecture which is to some extent fortified by the memorable fact that he once solemnly maintained that Lady Nairne intended her beautiful and pathetic ballad, "The Land o' the Leal," to apply to Scotland.

[1] Speech on Lord Grosvenor's Amendment to the Reform Bill, April 27, 1886.

[2] "Childe Harold," canto iv. 98.

For the rest, Mr Gladstone has invariably cultivated a ponderous, stilted, and mysterious style of communicating with the outer world. The largest number of words have been used to express the simplest thought, and the longer the words, the dearer they were to Mr Gladstone. Desiring to say that he had seen some goods packed for shipment, he thus delivered himself:[1] "I had the pleasure of seeing in a warehouse yesterday that beautiful manipulation performed which constitutes the process of packing goods for exportation." Being asked at one of his Mid-Lothian meetings a question as to Disestablishment, the following was his reply:—

"Probably I may find an occasion for referring more at large to this subject, to the great satisfaction of my querist, on some of the occasions when I may speak in the country; and therefore I will only say that so far as I am able to judge, we are thinking at the present time, and the people of Scotland are thinking, of other subjects, which are regarded, I believe, as of much more urgent and immediate duty than the determination of a very much controverted question, which, as I have said before, I believe the people of Scotland will find themselves perfectly sufficient to determine, and in a

[1] Speech at Manchester, October 12, 1853.

manner which the rest of the empire will respect, whether the answer be Aye or No. It is not within my knowledge, certainly, that the consideration of that question has entered definitely into the concerns of the present election, and therefore I do not feel my own information or means of judgment about it at all augmented in the course of it by anything that has reached me."

Having to say that he had been misreported, he put it thus:—

"We are requested by Mr Gladstone to state, with reference to certain interviews had on the part of French journals with him in Paris, that, while the reports given of those interviews in the French language bear testimony to the remarkable tact as well as accuracy of the reporters, there are certain passages, particularly some relating to public men and to contingencies in English politics, where, by deviations such as from the reporters' point of view appear insignificant, an effect is produced not in full harmony with Mr Gladstone's intention."

It is in this vein that Mr Gladstone usually speaks or writes. There is obscurity, no doubt, but the obscurity is not accidental. It may be that no one is able to see through it at the time; but Mr Gladstone can afterwards point to some sentence or other from which he is able to develop the entire outline of a policy adapted

to a popular demand. He makes a *cache*, and conceals in it something for future use. Thus, in anticipation of that further warfare upon the landed interest which he has constantly endeavoured to stimulate, he delivered a declaration intended to have its bearing on coming events:[1]—

"Let me say something to you on the subject which has occupied so much attention of late years—the subject of land. . . . The circumstances of land in England and Scotland demand the closest attention of the Government, but they are not the same as the circumstances of Ireland; and that which was most exceptional in the Act relating to Ireland, justified as it was by us, and felt by the majority of Parliament to be justified by the peculiar circumstances and conditions of that country, cannot be held to have a parallel application to a country whose condition has never been subjected to such disturbing action and such unparalleled misfortunes as has, unhappily, been the case with respect to various interests connected with the land in Ireland. But although that is so, and although I, at least, shall never be a party to the introduction of the Irish Land Act into England, nor, indeed, do I believe that is the desire of any sensible—I beg pardon, any appreciable—portion of the people of this country, yet there is much to be done."

"There is much to be done." Less than this

[1] Speech at Leeds, October 7, 1881.

was said in speeches which Mr Gladstone disentombed, long after they were forgotten by the world, in justification of his Irish Church policy, his Land Bills, and his Bill for transferring Ireland to Mr Parnell.

There are some adherents of Mr Gladstone who contend that *finesse* and strategy are necessary in politics, and that they do not affect the elevation of character which they ascribe to their leader. But even they are startled when suddenly confronted with some episodes in his life. They approve of his political gyrations because they have generally been successful; but they are not able to supply an explanation of the paradox that, while Mr Gladstone is always denouncing the "classes" and the aristocracy, he has created more peers—and peers of a more dubious kind—and fastened more pensioners on the State, and provided more friends and underlings with offices, than any modern Minister. Favouritism has never been absent from his dispensation of patronage, ecclesiastical or political. A list of all the preferments he has made in the Church, with his true reasons for making them, and another list of his peers

and his pensioners, would be instructive, although perhaps it might be condemned as involving a "personal attack" on Mr Gladstone. No one, therefore, would dream of complaining of his placing private secretaries, when he no longer had any use for them, in public offices worth £2000 or so a-year; nor of many similar acts of generosity at the public cost. But the Collier scandal is fairly open to discussion. Sir Robert Collier had rendered himself useful to Mr Gladstone, and he was made a member of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. It soon appeared that no one but a Judge was eligible for this appointment, whereupon Mr Gladstone made his friend a Judge of the Common Pleas, for two days only, and then transferred him to the Council. Lord Chief-Justice Cockburn denounced this as "an evasion of a statute," a "manufacture of a qualification," a "violation of the dignity of the judicial bench." Lord Westbury described it as "a fraudulent exercise of power," a "fraud on the Act." The whole Bench and Bar of England concurred in this censure. Under these

circumstances, Mr Gladstone took a course which, his friends all declared, saved his honour. He had perpetrated a job, but he showed his conscientiousness by declining to defend it. The deed was done, but if the doer of the deed censured it, the code of morals remained unbroken. Therefore Mr Gladstone went down to the House of Commons with a quickening discourse upon the duty of keeping pure, and he expressed a pious hope that "the House would never be drawn aside from the straight road of justice into slippery paths." This was a strange homily to be delivered by a man who had just been on the slippery paths to men who had not so much as looked at them.

The Ewelme scandal was a case in which a similar strategic operation was displayed; but after one or two misadventures, Mr Gladstone became more proficient in these details of official life, and managed to bestow his gifts without ostentatious infringement upon written or unwritten laws. At all times, however, he has been disposed to rely for vindication fully as much upon his popularity, and the influence

of his eloquence, as upon abstract justice or the intrinsic merits of his cause. Oratory is the all-in-all. He has opposed many popular measures, but no one remembers it. "Gladstone," records the late Lord Shaftesbury in his Diary, "ever voted in resistance to my efforts. . . . He gave no support to the Ten Hours Bill; he voted with Sir Robert Peel to rescind the famous decision in favour of it. He was the only member who endeavoured to delay the Bill which delivered women and children from mines and pits; and never did he say a word on behalf of the factory children until, *when defending slavery in the West Indies,* he taunted Buxton with indifference to the slavery in England."[1] He was against household suffrage: "I do not agree in the demand either for manhood or for household suffrage."[2] He scoffed at the idea that the colonies would ever be willing to afford any assistance to the mother country in time of war. The mere suggestion could only "excite

[1] Life of Lord Shaftesbury, vol. ii. p. 210.

[2] Letter to Mr Horsfall of Manchester, August 8, 1866, republished by Mr Gladstone in his "Reform Speeches," &c., 1866.

ridicule."[1] When these great communities actually came forward to his rescue in the midst of the Egyptian war, their offer was at first coldly received, in accordance with the uniform policy of the Liberal party, which has always sought to disparage and estrange the colonies. In the midst of the hardships caused by unprecedented agricultural depression, he advised the English farmer to "turn his attention to jam," or to "grow eggs," so as to minister to the "enormous insatiable capacity of the human stomach."[2] Advice on all subjects drips from him at every step. During an election his post-cards flutter in the air like the announcements of a coming circus. No man who has held high office has ever before interfered so scandalously in elections. There is scarcely a constituency which has not been favoured with a telegram or a message from Mr Gladstone. The warnings of 1886 may possibly put an end to these disgraceful operations. Most of the candidates who were outlawed by Mr Gladstone were triumphantly returned to Parliament, and his

[1] Article in the Nineteenth Century, September 1878.
[2] Speech at Hawarden, January 9, 1884.

recommendations generally proved fatal to his friends. The lesson was not lost upon the friends, although Mr Gladstone failed to perceive its true significance. He never knows when he has made a mistake.

For nature, or the use which becomes second nature, has so ordered it that Mr Gladstone has no consciousness of the mischief he has occasioned or of the errors he has committed. In one of his latest productions,[1] he praises the Factory Acts, without, apparently, the slightest consciousness that he bitterly opposed them. He makes an allusion to the Crimean war, but carefully omits to mention his own share in it. He seems, indeed, to have boldly resolved to ignore all the circumstances connected with it, for he "conceives" that "it was an attempt, not wholly unsuccessful, to apply European authority towards keeping the peace of Europe." There surely never was a more "wholly unsuccessful" attempt to keep the peace, nor one which was less justified by its final results. He deplores the frequency of wars, and the

[1] Article on "Locksley Hall and the Jubilee"—Nineteenth Century, January 1887.

cost to the nation of preparations for war, but he preserves a profound silence about Egypt, the Soudan, and his vote of credit of £11,000,000. In all this he is faithful to the code of morals which he has established for himself—condemn a wrong act in principle, and then you are free to commit the act as often as you please. His conscience is clear; come what may, he has done what was right. He looks back, and sees nothing to regret. Whatever may have been the faults of others, he is blameless. Memory, remorse, the sorrowful recollection of false steps which have led to disaster—these, and phantoms such as these, have no terrors for him. Yet there comes an awakening even to one who is armed with a triple plate of self-confidence. There must be moments when Mr Gladstone looks out upon the world, and sees it as it is, and at such moments he cannot but be aware that there are millions of his countrymen who believe, with as much depth of conviction and earnestness as he can believe anything whatever, that he has wrought more harm in England than any Minister that ever lived; that he has inflicted irreparable blows upon

the influence and renown which has been her birthright for centuries; that he has stirred up civil strife which may never be allayed without civil war; that he has set class against class, and man against man, until the whole land is overrun with perplexity and discord. Ambitious, intriguing, and extravagant, trampling all things under foot to gain his ends, he seems, in some dark way, to regard it as his destiny to work out those decrees which he attributes to Providence. "It may be," he once said, "that the prosperity of the country required the chastening hand of Providence, that we should be taught to suffer and struggle, so that we might not be too proud of the great power and wealth to which this country has attained."[1] His pitiless contempt for the sufferings of others, the calmness with which he scatters abroad "firebrands and arrows of death," would be almost unintelligible upon any other theory than that which he has himself shadowed forth —that he is the chosen instrument of a divinely appointed chastisement, a new scourge of God. Follow out his career from the day in

[1] Speech at Hawarden, January 12, 1882.

which his rashness and his negligence helped to send an army of English soldiers to perish of cold, disease, and starvation in the Crimea, down to the time when he was responsible for the slaughter of thousands of men whose only crime, he declared, was that of "struggling to be free," and terrible to every eye must be the record which it presents. The day is coming —let us even hope that it has come—when the nation will cast off the illusions which have so long led it astray, and will insist on being brought face to face with facts; and the facts will be Mr Gladstone's all-sufficient and everlasting condemnation.

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